Buddhism in China

Collected Papers of Erik Zürcher



Edited by

JONATHAN A. SILK

BRILL

Buddhism in China

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Professor Zürcher in Fujian in April 1999. Family collection.

PREFACE

The industry required to produce the present volume in the end surprised me, and I certainly could not have done it alone. To begin, several of the articles published here have been translated especially for this volume: "Mahā-Cīna: The Buddhist Reinterpretation of the History of China," "The Spread of Buddhism and Christianity in Imperial China: Spontaneous Diffusion Versus Guided Propagation" and "Nuns and Convents in Old Chinese Buddhism" were translated from Zürcher's elegant French by Thomas Cruijsen, with helpful corrections offered by Vincent Tournier. I translated the Preface to *Het leven van de Boeddha* (The Life of the Buddha) from Dutch, in which I was helped by many friends and colleagues. In the first place my deep thanks go to Jamila Bakkers, whose support meant so much to me. A number of important corrections were made by Ruud van der Helm, and for a few further remarks I thank Berthe Jansen. For comments on the linguistic items in Zürcher's 'propositions' quoted in my Introduction, I thank my colleague Rint Sybesma.

In the production of the volume itself, the single most important person has been my student Li Na 李娜. It is thanks to her that the Chinese characters are inserted in the articles, rather than as character lists at the end (or omitted all together), that numerous precise locations of Chinese passages were identified, many errors in romanization and so forth were corrected, and more. To her are also due the indices. I cannot thank her enough.

The papers in the present volume have not been edited as such, although I have endeavored to remove misprints (though no doubt new ones were introduced as the papers were type-set anew, and missed during my proof-reading), and to standardize some treatments as much as possible. All Chinese, except of course proper names of modern authors, has been romanized in *pinyin*, and in a number of places characters have been added. Some mistaken references or wrong characters have been corrected, and in the first article printed here, and in several other places where I thought it helpful, precise references have been given where Zürcher provided only column indications. In a few cases in the Chinese in the first article, Zürcher seems to have mis-copied the text when he wrote the passages out by hand; we print the text as found in the Taishō edition.

Other efforts have also been made at standardization, when possible with reasonable effort, but I am well aware that much remains unstandardized. For this I apologize only by saying that I firmly believe, with Voltaire, that "*le mieux est l'ennemi du bien*."

ABBREVIATIONS

BAV	Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.
BC	*The Buddhist Conquest of China*, E. Zürcher, 1959.
BnF	Bibliotheque nationale de France, Paris.
BQNZ	*Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 (T 2063), by Baochang 寶唱, completed around 520 CE.
CCT ARSI	[Standaert, Nicolas] 鐘鳴旦 and [Adrian Dudink] 杜鼎克 eds. 2002. *Yesuhui Luoma Dang'anguan Ming-Qing Tianzhujiao wenxian* 耶穌會羅馬檔案館明清天主教文獻 (Chinese Christian Texts from the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus) 12 vols. Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute.
CSZJJ	*Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (T 2145), by Sengyou 僧祐, completed between 515 and 518 CE.
DTNDL	*Da Tang neidian lu* 大唐內典錄 (T 2149), by Daoxuan 道宣, CE 664.
DZ	*Daozang* 道藏.
FZTJ	*Fozu tongji* 佛祖統記 (T 2035), by Zhipan 志磐, completed between 1258 and 1269.
GHMC	*Guang Hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (T 2103), by Daoxuan 道宣, CE 664.
GSZ	*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (T 2059), by Huijiao 慧皎; c. CE 530.
HCC	Standaert, Nicolas, ed. 2001. *Handbook of Christianity in China*. Volume One: 635–1800. Leiden: Brill.
HHS	*Hou Han shu* 後漢書, by Fan Ye 范曄.
HMJ	*Hongming ji* 弘明集 (T 2102), by Sengyou 僧祐, completed between 515 and 518 CE.
HS	*Hanshu* 漢書, by Ban Gu 班固.
j.	*juan* 卷.
KYSJL	*Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (T 2154), by Zhisheng 智昇, CE 730.
Ls	*Liang shu* 梁書, comp. by Yao Cha 姚察 and Yao Silian 姚思廉, completed in CE 636. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973.
NQs	*Nan Qi shu* 南齊書, comp. by Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (fl. 490–537). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972.
Ns	*Nan shi* 南史, comp. by Li Dashi 李大師 and Li Yanshou 李延壽, completed in CE 659. Beijing; Zhonghua shuju, 1976.
P	Pelliot number of Dunhuang manuscript held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

S	Stein number of Dunhuang manuscripts held in the British Library.
SBBY	*Sibu beiyao* 四部備要, Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1936.
SGSZ	*Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (T 2061), by Zanning 贊寧.
Ss	*Song shu* 宋書, comp. by Shen Yue 沈約, completed c. 450, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974.
T	*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. 1924–1935. 100 vols. Tokyo.
TXCH	*Tianxue chuhan* 天學初函 (First Collection of [Texts on] Heavenly Studies), Comp. by Li Zhizao 李之藻, first ed. 1626; repr. 1965 (*Zhongguo shixue congshu* 中國史學叢書, 23), Taibei: Xuesheng shuju, 6 vols.
WX	Wu Xiangxiang 吳相湘, ed. 1965. *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian* 天主教東傳文獻 (*Zhongguo shixue congshu* 中國史學叢書, 24), Taibei: Xuesheng shuju.
WXSB	Wu Xiangxiang 吳相湘, ed. 1972. *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian sanbian* 天主教東傳文獻三編 (*Zhongguo shixue congshu xubian* 中國史學叢書續編, 21), Taibei: Xuesheng shuju, 6 vols.
WXXB	Wu Xiangxiang 吳相湘, ed. 1966. *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian xubian* 天主教東傳文獻緒編 (*Zhongguo shixue congshu* 中國史學叢書, 40), Taibei: Xuesheng shuju, 3 vols.
XGYT	*Xu gujin yijing tuji* 續古今譯經圖記 (T 2152), by Zhisheng 智昇, CE 730.
ZJML (I)	*Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄 (T 2146), by Fajing 法經 and others, CE 594.
ZJML (II)	*Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄 (T 2147), by Yancong 彥悰 and others, CE 602.
Zoku	*Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經. 1905–1912. Kyoto.

INTRODUCTION

Modern ("Western") scholarly engagement with Chinese Buddhism appears to have significantly deeper roots, and to have exerted significantly more profound influences on the development of European thought, than had previously been believed.[1] This still largely unknown history not withstanding, critical investigations of Chinese Buddhism from a historically grounded perspective remain a relatively recent phenomenon,[2] one of the prime movers in this regard having been the Leiden professor Erik Zürcher (13 September 1928–7 February 2008). Beginning with virtually his first academic contribution, the epoch-making *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, his doctoral dissertation published in 1959, for four and a half decades Zürcher continued his studies of Chinese Buddhism with a number of very influential papers, though never again did he produce a book-length study of the topic. The present volume, then, while not a synthesis per se, for the first time brings together the most important of Zürcher's continuing contributions to the study of Buddhism in China, including several studies that, even in this internet age, have remained very difficult to locate, and others translated for the first time into English. The present Introduction, for its part, offers no more than a brief sketch of Prof. Zürcher's academic life, his contributions, and some remarks on the papers presented here.[3]

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1 See most impressively Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

2 If one wants to look backwards, certainly early works such as those of Beal, Edkins and a few others deserve serious mention, as do the works of Zürcher's predecessors and teachers, including Bagchi, Chavannes, and Demiéville, as well as, needless to say, those of a number of Japanese scholars.

3 In preparing these remarks about Zürcher, his background, education and work, I have made use of Teiser's Foreword to the third edition of Zürcher's *Buddhist Conquest* ("Social History and the Confrontation of Cultures"), Tim Barrett's "Erik Zürcher, 1928–2008: Buddhism and the European Understanding of China" (*The China Quarterly* 196 [December 2008]: 919–923), the memorial note by Barend ter Haar found at http://www.hum.leidenuniv.nl/medewerkers/forum/index-108/im-zurcher-engl-108.html, and the remarks of Wilt Idema in *Levensberichten en herdenkingen 2009* of the Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2009): 100–108. Some of the material here, though not this Introduction as a whole, appeared earlier as a memorial note in the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 30/1–2 [2008 date, published 2010]: 3–22, and again in Japanese in *Tōhōgaku*

It is not intended to offer a critical appraisal of this work; for that, a conference will be convened in Leiden in early 2014, the papers from which will be edited as a companion volume to the present one, offering the essential evaluation, revision, correction and continuation Zürcher's research calls forth. It is important to emphasize at the outset, however, that, as is only to be expected of innovative work which so often broke new ground, not every conclusion reached by Zürcher can be accepted, and needless to say, his work also contains plain errors.[4] In the present volume it was decided not to editorially correct or augment Zürcher's findings (with the exception of corrections of misprints and such things as wrong romanization of Chinese). Therefore, quoted Chinese texts are not repunctuated, for instance, even when they probably should be, and so on.[5]

Erik Zürcher was born in Utrecht, in the center of the Netherlands, where he was educated through secondary school. Although he originally intended to study Egyptology, when he came to the University of Leiden he began instead the study of Sinology, and was soon invited to join more advanced classes with Jan Julius Lodewijk (J. J. L.) Duyvendak (1889–1954). During this time his interests in art led him to Sweden, where he worked with Osval Siren (1879–1966), this resulting in one of his first publications, "Imitation and Forgery in Ancient Chinese Painting and Calligraphy."[6] Later he was to publish a few other papers also directed at art and material culture, including one reprinted here, the extremely stimulating "Buddhist Art in Medieval China: The Ecclesiastical View", although this field

東方學 120 (2010): 153–162. By far the most detailed notices of Zürcher's academic life are those published by Adrian Dudink, "In memoriam Erik Zürcher 許理和 (1928–2008)," *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* 30 (2008): 1–16, and the forthcoming two chapters of Barend ter Haar in Wilt Idema, ed., *Chinese Studies in the Netherlands: Past, Present, and Future* (Leiden: Brill, expected 2013), "Between the Dutch Indies and philology, 1919–1974" and "Rediscovering Chinese religion and contemporary China."

4 As a single example, he offers several times the definition of *sīmā* as a begging circuit, while it refers rather to a legally defined domain within which official acts of a Buddhist community, such as the uposatha ritual, are conducted by the universal assent of all monks resident therein; it has nothing at all to do with begging.

5 Thanks to the kindness of my colleague Prof. dr. Erik-Jan Zürcher, who at my request looked over his father's collection of his own off-prints, I have learned that no corrections are to be found therein. According to E.-J. Zürcher, his father's attitude was that once he was finished with something, he did not pick it up again, and thus it is fully to be expected that he did not trouble himself to correct, emend or add additional notes to his own publications. This may also well account for his having made no apparent efforts to update or correct his *Buddhist Conquest of China*, even in the face of helpful and corrective reviews, on which see below.

6 *Oriental Art* (1956): 141–156.

never became a major research interest. At Leiden Zürcher worked under Duyvendak's successor the historian Anthony Francois Paulus Hulsewé (1910–1993), who served as his doctoral supervisor. In 1961 Zürcher himself took up what had been the chair of Colonial History, which was renamed "Far Eastern History, in particular the contacts between East and West"; after being held by Kristoffer Schipper (1934–) between 1993–1999, this chair subsequently passed to Zürcher's own student, Barend ter Haar (1958–), who held the position until 2013. Important formative influences on Zürcher included his study in Paris with Paul Demiéville (1894–1979) and his friendship, if not rivalry, with Jacques Gernet (1921–), whose interests were so very similar to his own in many respects. From 1976 to 1992 Zürcher was co-editor together with Gernet of the journal *T'oung Pao*, which had always been a joint Leiden-Paris effort, and remains the oldest continuously published sinological journal. In the preface to his *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, Zürcher also mentioned his appreciation of his "honoured friends Et[ienne] Balázs . . . and P[iet] van der Loon" and his "commilitones A[rthur] F. Wright . . . and L[eon] Hurvitz." These connections with the most excellent ranks of Sinologists and students of Chinese Buddhism were clearly important for his trajectory as a scholar. Zürcher was, among other things, a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (from 1975) and Correspondant étranger de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres in Paris (from 1985), and his close connections with the tradition of French sinology are thus obvious in multiple dimensions. Three of the papers offered here in English were originally presented in French to this very same Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres and to the Collège de France.

It is impossible fully to come to terms with any scholarly life, and the bare facts of his career offer little hint to Zürcher's impact on his chosen fields of study. One thing to be made clear is that, despite the contributions discussed here, Zürcher himself would not have characterized his field as Buddhist Studies pur sang, but rather perhaps as Chinese History, with a focus on the integration and naturalization of the foreign into Chinese culture. In particular, at least in so far as they are preserved in the form of written documents, Zürcher's scholarly interests were almost equally split between (earlier) Chinese Buddhism and Christianity in China. The present volume deals with the former,[7] although since Zürcher saw the

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[7] For an appraisal focused on Zürcher's work on Christianity in China, see Nicolas Standaert, "Erik Zürcher's Study of Christianity in Seventeenth-Century China: An Intellectual

processes of the introductions of the two foreign traditions into China as in some ways parallel, several of the papers found here do also deal inter alia with Christianity to some extent.

The overall importance of Zürcher's contributions may be capsulized by saying that they were, in a much overused but here entirely apt characterization, seminal. They are represented, however, relatively sparsely: one monograph,[8] a small general book, a volume of translation and some thirty papers.

The main theme of Zürcher's research was cultural interaction, which in the case of Buddhism meant the ways in which this foreign religion found, or forged, a home in China. Or perhaps this is the wrong way to put it for Zürcher, since he was not interested in seeing the process—pace the provocative title of his book—from the point of view of the foreign invaders, as it were; on the contrary, he always gazed squarely from the side of the Chinese themselves.[9] As will be mentioned below, Zürcher found the contrast with the case of Christianity in China interesting and challenging. He approached both sets of questions of acculturation (or 'inculturation,' although Zürcher did not use this missiological term) entirely from the side of reception. He paid careful attention to early Chinese trans-

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Portrait." *China Review International* 15/4 (2010): 472–502. As his works on Chinese Christianity are more widely available than those on Buddhism, there are no present plans to collect the former in a separate volume, according to a personal communication from Prof. Standaert.

[8] But oh, what a monograph!—the monumental *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, first published in 1959 and reprinted in 1972 and 2007. These are referred to by the publisher (the same Brill which issues the present volume) as new editions, but in fact they are virtually identical as far as content is concerned, only the typography having been updated: in the second edition Zürcher's elegant but poorly reproduced calligraphy was replaced with type-set Chinese characters; in the 3rd edition the whole text is reset and the romanization changed to Pinyin, but the pagination is retained. It is a pity that this most recent reprint appears not as the original in two volumes, with text and notes separated, but in a single binding, making reference to the extensive notes laborious. As already noted, neither subsequent printing made any effort to correct errors, even those plainly pointed out by reviewers.

[9] For Arthur Wright in his review of *Buddhist Conquest* (2-d in the list of publications) "The title is surely a misnomer, for this is a close and careful study of two cultures—Chinese and Buddhist—interacting with one another, with neither, at the period's end, 'conquering' the other. I doubt that military metaphor is ever applicable to studies of culture contact and acculturation. It certainly is not here."

Zürcher was not altogether unaware of this imbalance of his study. In the preface to the 1972 reprint, he wrote: "The reader may feel that in describing the process of acculturation I have somewhat overstressed the Chinese side. The reader is right: it takes two to acculturate. More stress could have been given to the 'donor' side—the way in which the foreign missionaries consciously or unconsciously responded to the Chinese public and its demands."

lations of Buddhist scriptures, for example, but even in his grammatical discussions almost never entered into considerations of the Indic sources the Chinese (or Central Asian) translators were attempting to render, although he could not avoid such obvious issues as the introduction of mid-sentence vocatives, previously unknown in Chinese and appearing only as a calque on Indic sentence order. This concentration on the Chinese reception of Buddhism yields many advantages, but at least as far as translation goes, it is essential to study both the input as well as the output of the process, as it were, as recent work by Seishi Karashima and Stefano Zacchetti, for instance, attempts to do.

Although he did touch upon later Chinese Buddhism in some publications, the lion's share of Zürcher's attention was devoted to the earlier periods, with the fifth century a tacit upper limit (and he more than once explicitly limited his interest to the period between the first and fifth centuries). The primary thrust of Zürcher's research was to build up, stone by stone, as comprehensive a mosaic of early Chinese Buddhism as possible. He began this effort with his *Buddhist Conquest of China* which was, however, as he acknowledged, largely concerned with literate, socially and politically prominent elites. In his Foreword to the 2007 reprint, Stephen Teiser wrote (p. xv):

> The most important sources come from two classes of Chinese Buddhist writing. One class consists of the early biographies of famous monks and nuns and a history of the formation of the Chinese Tripiṭaka. The second class is what Zürcher terms "early apologetic and propagandistic literature," that is, works written by Buddhist devotees, both lay and monastic, designed to defend the faith from the criticisms of its cultured despisers. . . . [W]e should pause to note what Zürcher is leaving out and to appreciate the weight of the unannounced tradition that he is arguing against. Zürcher intentionally ignores the great number of texts in the Chinese Buddhist canon that were translated during this period from Sanskrit and other Indian languages. As Zürcher writes elsewhere, the canon is an embarrassment of riches; its sheer volume seems to suggest how well it represents Chinese Buddhism.

Teiser's points here are, first, that Zürcher's sources belong to the small slice of elites at the top of the Buddhist pyramid, second that the texts in question are mostly self-consciously propagandistic, and third that he turns away for the most part from translations, in favor of native compositions. It could certainly be argued that to a very great extent these choices alone strongly determined the kind of picture Zürcher ultimately was able to paint.

Teiser goes on to point out how reliant Zürcher is on the work of the Chinese scholar Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 and his *History of Buddhism*

during the Han, Wei, Two Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties (*Han Wei Liangjin Nanbei-chao fojiao shi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史), published in 1938. But he concludes, interestingly (p. xix):

> In the end, I believe that Zürcher's reliance on Tang's work is in fact a strength. As an in-depth, modern guide through the complexities and problems of the primary sources, Tang's book remains the indispensable starting point for any serious work in early Chinese Buddhism. Zürcher's use of Tang is a testament to the interconnections between two great traditions of modern scholarship, both a sign of the past and an augur for the future.[10]

Teiser further points out that "since 1959 no original work in a western language broadly covering the same period of Chinese Buddhist history has been published," and we may add that this remains the case today. This lack is certainly due to several factors—the excellence of Zürcher's book, a growing recognition of the availability of previously unexplored sources (much of this awareness in its turn thanks to Zürcher's own further studies), and an appreciation of the difficulty of such comprehensive surveys. For, tackling big questions requires big theoretical assumptions, which are out of favor in some quarters these days, especially among the more philologically minded who dare to delve into the very difficult old materials which provide the fodder for such research.

Teiser devotes a number of pages of his Foreword to criticism of Zürcher's book, some of which concerns these very theories. In this respect, one point of interest is that although Teiser notes in his bibliography Arthur Wright's review of *Buddhist Conquest*, implicitly noted by Zürcher himself in his 1972 Preface where he avers that he would not again use the term 'gentry,' for example, Teiser does not anywhere actually refer to Wright's review, nor did Zürcher himself explicitly acknowledge the sometimes detailed critiques his book evoked from Wright and others. He did write in the 1972 edition: "It goes without saying that a new version would bear the marks of beneficial criticism, made by masters and colleagues in reviews and personal correspondence," and the reprint

[10] It should further be pointed out that unlike the work of Tang or the Japanese scholar Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆, Zürcher was compelled not to quote his sources in the original Chinese but to offer an interpretation in the medium of translation, a far from trivial task with such difficult materials. From this point of view, even a mere translation of Tang's study, along the lines perhaps of Hurvitz's lavishly annotated rendering of Tsukamoto's *Chūgoku Bukkyō Tsūshi* 中国仏教通史 (1968) as *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism, From Its Introduction to the Death of Hui-yüan* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985), would have constituted a substantial contribution. What Zürcher accomplished is, however, much more than this.

contains two pages of corrections of Zhou Yiliang (hidden after the index). But corrections of Zürcher's translations, for instance, are passed over in silence by all concerned.[11] This, however, certainly does not mean that Zürcher considered the work begun in *Buddhist Conquest* completed by that work, as is made explicit in his new preface to the Japanese translation of that work which appeared in 1995, the original English version of which is printed here for the first time.[12]

In fact, Zürcher evidently regarded this study as a mere beginning, in part because of the range of materials which it considered; he more than once characterized the types of information available from written sources as not only biased, but distorted out of all proportion. But such "official" sources of information are not in fact the only ones available. A similar distinction has been pointed out vividly for a later period by the lamented Antonino Forte in his review of Stanley Weinstein's *Buddhism Under the T'ang*, in which Forte praises Weinstein for exhausting traditional sources, but critiques him for, inter alia, ignoring other materials,[13] many of which Forte himself mined to such brilliant ends. For the earlier periods under Zürcher's lens, however, even such unofficial materials are rarely available, leaving us with the question: how can one learn to see the invisible?

Zürcher's thesis seems to have taken the wind out of his sails, and through the 1960s and most of the 1970s he published very little on Buddhism, save a couple of general surveys. He was not idle, however, and the next decades reveal the fruit of his work (and he was certainly extremely active on other fronts during this period, including initiating the highly successful Documentation and Research Center for Contemporary China). In fact, he had been busy on the problem of visualizing the invisible. In 1980 Zürcher published his survey "Buddhist Influence on Early Daoism: a survey of scriptural influence," followed quickly by "Eschatology and Messianism in Early Chinese Buddhism" and "'Prince Moonlight': Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism." These papers reveal more than Zürcher's vast reading in the Daoist canon (of which he seems to have made little use thereafter). While they certainly

[11] Of the reviews mentioned under the listing for the *Buddhist Conquest of China*, below, the following contain substantial corrections and should absolutely be consulted by any serious scholar: Janusz Chmielewski, Timoteus Pokora, Galene Eugene Sargent, Arthur F. Wright, and (on the second edition) Chuang Shen.

[12] I am grateful to Prof. Fumio Tanaka 田中文雄, one of the Japanese translators of *The Buddhist Conquest*, for a copy of Zürcher's English original.

[13] *T'oung Pao*, 2nd Series, 75/4–5 (1989): 317–324.

stand as a contribution to Daoist Studies, I read them differently. I think they mark the first sustained effort to try to overcome the horrible imbalance Zürcher lamented in his evidence about early Chinese Buddhism; I think they represent his effort to seek some way of seeing into the darkness. More prosaically put, the problem to which Zürcher returned again and again is how to squeeze from sources which do not explicitly deal with Buddhism information nevertheless relevant to its (otherwise obscure) early reception in China.

In early texts of Daoism, Zürcher thought he had found a way to backlight, as it were, the types of concerns which could only have shone or reflected onto Daoist surfaces from otherwise invisible Buddhist faces. In other words, what he looked for in seeking out Buddhist influences on Daoism were Buddhist elements in contemporary Chinese society which left no palpable trace elsewhere. Almost as with the fossilized impression of a dinosaur's skin left in mud, Zürcher sought in these papers to learn about Buddhism by studying the *impressions* it made on another object, in this case, the formative thought of Daoism. Some further efforts have been made to follow up this methodological foray, but it remains an understudied area.

Despite his rather clear, if tacit, presupposition of the nature of correct and proper normative Buddhism, Zürcher is especially interested in what he does *not* find reflected in Daoist texts: the "complete absence of typically scholastic terminology" indicates "a very low level of doctrinal sophistication" ("Buddhist Influence" here p. 138). "Daoism," he writes further, "was not influenced by 'professional' Buddhism, but through the distorting and simplifying filter of *lay* Buddhism; we must assume that the human contacts which formed the channel of transmission must not be sought in the monasteries or the *qingtan* salons where learned monks were present to explain the doctrine . . . but rather in lay society where Daoists and Buddhist devotees met. . . ." (here p. 160). This leads him to conclude (here p. 163) that "the selection of Buddhist ideas, particularly at the level of complex borrowings that we find in Daoist literature, gives a very valuable clue as to what ideas were the 'focal points' in Buddhism with the strongest appeal—so strong that they could influence Chinese thought beyond the limits of the Buddhist community and be accepted by its greatest rival." He immediately continues:

> But if we agree with the conclusion drawn above, that Daoism in fact got its Buddhist impulses from lay Buddhism, the information is even more valuable. We actually know very little about that sector of Buddhist religion in mediaeval China. . . . It could well be that a more detailed analysis of

> Buddhist complexes mirrored in Daoist literature could teach us much about contemporary lay Buddhism, in spite of all misunderstandings and distortions. But perhaps such misunderstandings and distortions were also widely spread among the simple Buddhist believers themselves. Perhaps we are—as so often happens—handicapped by the fact that we can only observe Buddhism and Daoism at the very highest level, that of the religious "professionals" and their written texts—the tops of two pyramids. We may consider the possibility that at a lower level the bodies of the pyramids merged into a much less differentiated lay religion, and that at the very base both systems largely dissolved into an indistinct mass of popular beliefs and practices.

In his studies on eschatology, Zürcher directed his attention to materials which either fell below the radar of the official arbiters of Buddhist norms, or which were actively suppressed by them. He linked these in a number of cases to the Buddho-Daoist substrate which he postulated to run beneath, as it were, the high traditions as a common river. And this pattern can be detected in other studies as well, although perhaps not in exactly the same manner. For example, Zürcher devoted a number of studies to the earliest translations and translators. On the one hand, this topic involves the court and official sanction or canonization of translations, a process executed in the still under-studied catalogues of the canon. At the same time, much translation, and other scripture production, as with certain eschatological texts, took place outside of and alongside official channels. Zürcher's interest in these translations extended to the language in which they were composed, and while it is hard to say which came first, this interest in the translations as preserving evidence of the early sources of Chinese Buddhism also proved to be a key to thinking about early vernacular Chinese language.

The ways in which texts were rendered from foreign tongues by those outside the educated literate elite allowed Zürcher to speculate that it is possible to discern traces of "the living language of second century Luoyang" among these earliest works by the translators An Shigao and a few others. The problems were naturally not only linguistic; as Zürcher says in "A New Look at the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Texts" (p. 278), "The question will be to what extent, and in what ways, these archaic translations can be made to yield information about the intellectual and social context of the very first stage of Chinese Buddhism." Discoveries in the Nanatsudera collection in Nagoya, Japan, and elsewhere of further texts reliably attributed to An Shigao are moving research in this area forward in new directions.

I mentioned above that despite few publications on Buddhism during this period, Zürcher was evidently not idle during the 1960s and 1970s.

Alongside his Daoist studies a further fruit of this period remains almost unknown (even in the Netherlands), and might even appear to be a non-scholarly product. That is his *Het leven van de Boeddha* (Life of the Buddha) of 1978. Published in a popular series, without a single Chinese character in evidence, this is nevertheless a monument of learning, an integral translation of the *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經 (T. 184) and *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經 (T. 196), the two-part hagiography which Zürcher dated to the second century. That this work remains nearly unknown internationally is due, without doubt, entirely to the fact that it is written in Dutch. I include here, for the breadth of vision it illustrates, my translation of Zürcher's Introduction to the volume. Although the fact was unknown to Zürcher, who believed this work to represent the earliest Chinese 'biography' of the Buddha, in light of the recent research of Kawano Satoshi,[14] the *Xiuxing benqi jing*—*Zhong benqi jing* complex appears to be not nearly as old as it pretends to be, and further researches on the life story of the-Buddha in China will have to pay attention both to Zürcher's translation and Kawano's study.

Attention should further be drawn to the important remarks on "Buddhism and Education in Tang Times" and "Buddhist Art in Medieval China: The Ecclesiastical View," subjects which are hardly noticed by other scholars, or at least not by scholars sufficiently equipped to deal with them. Recent publications on Chinese Buddhist art by scholars writing in English seem all too frequently to highlight the vast chasm separating those who specialize in visual culture from those trained to read written sources. Scholarship by the former in particular sometimes contains statements that make a textual scholar cringe. Working from his base of rock solid philological mastery of written sources, Zürcher's sensitivity to aspects of the materiality of manuscripts and other objects should certainly serve as a model for others.

Zürcher's parallel interest in Christianity in China clearly sat, in his own mind, cheek and jowl with his attention to Buddhism. For him, these two interests on the largest scale form two poles, as it were, of a common problem. In fact, Zürcher explicitly confronts this issue in a short but extremely interesting paper presented here as "The Spread of Buddhism and Christianity in Imperial China: Spontaneous Diffusion Versus Guided

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[14] Kawano Satoshi 河野訓, *Kan'yaku Butsuden Kenkyū* 漢訳仏伝研究 (Ise: Kōgakkan Daigaku Shuppanbu 皇學館大学出版部, 2007). Kawano makes no reference to Zürcher's translation, and indeed pays virtually no attention to any Western scholarship.

Propagation." Zürcher attempts to understand why it is that the foreign religion Buddhism succeeded in implanting itself in Chinese soil, and why Christianity, in the form of Roman Catholicism, failed. Zürcher's conclusion is as follows:

> We have brought out a whole range of contrasts and oppositions: spontaneous infiltration through contact versus guided introduction from outside; unprepared roaming monks versus well-trained missionaries; monastery versus church and mission house; free Buddhist laity versus bound Christian converts; polycentrism and pluriformity versus imposed uniformity; indigenous sources of income versus external funding; a defined and homogeneous role as religious expert versus a broken, dissonant role pattern as "missionary scholar". These many oppositions yet have one thing in common: they are all related to the character of the Jesuit mission as a guided process. And that is the great paradox: planning and guidance were factors of weakness and vulnerability of Christianity in China, whereas Buddhism drew its strength from its lack of planning and coordination, from the spontaneous nature of its growth, and from the absence of any central guidance.

There are naturally some topics which Zürcher told us he intended to address, but never did. In his "Eschatology and Messianism," for example (p. 42), he promises to examine theories of *mofa* ('decline of the teaching'), a project of which we hear no more. Perhaps the most disappointing loss is the disappearance of a draft grammar of Kumārajīva's translation of the Lotus Sūtra. I have been assured of its one-time existence by my colleague Barend ter Haar, but it has proved impossible to locate a copy, and the draft must be considered lost.

It must come as something of a surprise to realize that as a teacher Zürcher only directed two doctoral theses on Buddhism, those of the just mentioned Barend ter Haar (published as *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* [1992]), and of Valentina Georgieva, "Buddhist Nuns in China from the Six Dynasties to the Tang" (2000, regrettably still unpublished). To be sure, he taught and influenced many students less directly, including a generation of students most of whom probably never met him. But especially in light of his failure to form a 'school' of Buddhist studies though his students, our main clues to his thinking come through his work.

As one way of reframing Zürcher's scholarly interests over his life, it is interesting to take a look at (my English translation of) the list of 10 'Propositions' which he prepared in 1959, as all students defending their doctoral dissertations in Leiden continue to do. To my mind, this list casts a light on some of the themes which underlay Zürcher's entire scholarly endeavor.

I: The present-day claim posited by some Chinese historians that the Chinese authorities initially deliberately promoted Buddhism as an "ideological weapon" is based on a one-sided interpretation of a very small amount of data.

II: It would be important to examine whether the process of penetration and adaptation of Buddhism in Chinese culture shows certain similarities with the penetration of other major religions in other major culture areas, particularly those of Christendom in the Roman Empire and Islam in Iran, India and South-East Asia.

III: Maspero's qualification of the subject-predicate phrase in Chinese as an attributive phrase is incorrect (cf. H. Maspero in *Encyclopédie française*, Paris, 1937, Tome I, 2me partie, *Le Langage*, p. l.40.16 sqq.).

IV: The claim that Chinese "has no word-accent in the strict sense" would certainly not be true for Northern Chinese (cf. Prof. Dr. A. W. de Groot, *Structurale Syntaxis*, 1949, p. 28).

V: The classification of sentence types on the basis of position-determining "particles" must be the point of departure of the structural description of Classical Chinese.

VI: The penetration of Buddhism in Japan differed significantly from the corresponding process in China, yet still showed typical points of similarity with the introduction of Buddhism in the "Barbarian States" in northern Chinese territory since the fourth century.

VII: *Yāna* may originally have meant "career" rather than "vehicle" (cf. e.g., E.J. Thomas, *History of Buddhist Thought*, p. 178), but it remains a remarkable fact that the word in Chinese translations from the earliest times onward is only presented as "vehicle" (*sheng*).

VIII: Due to its ties with Indology, Western Buddhist Studies remains largely limited to the study of Indian Buddhism.

IX: The study of the earlier phases of Chinese calligraphy and painting should start from a formal description and analysis of the available material, without paying attention to issues of attribution and authenticity.

X: The lack of lectures in the history of East Asia is a serious and worsening gap in academic history education.

We can see that the very first proposition refers to an idea no longer, as far as I know, taken seriously in scholarship, whereas the second is a theme Zürcher himself attempted to expand upon throughout his career. The next three items are not equally clear to me, but it is obvious that Chinese grammar was a subject of profound interest in its own right to Zürcher,

and not merely an adjunct to his other interests, such as those in Buddhist texts. As far as I know, Zürcher never published on questions relating to Japan, but his interest in the introduction of Buddhism in the 'barbarian north' pervades his *Buddhist Conquest*, of course. Nothing need be said of the individual observation offered as his seventh point, but for the eighth, we might say that much of his scholarly career was dedicated to righting this lopsided view, which today probably is not obvious to those with less awareness of the state of the field in the first half of the twentieth century; the very absence of this imbalance from the present-day landscape is in great measure due to the efforts of Zürcher (although of course not to him alone). Regarding the ninth point, Zürcher again did not publish much, but the work presented below as chapter 9, 'Buddhism and Education in Tang Times,' is a landmark discussion of calligraphy based on a broad familiarity with manuscript sources, focused indeed on formal description. Finally, although not directly related to his studies on Buddhism, as Professor at Leiden University Zürcher worked tirelessly to promote the teaching of the history of East Asia, compiling for instance a syllabus illustrated by slides with accompanying text.

The papers in this volume are presented in the chronological order of their first publication, in order to allow the reader to follow the development of Zürcher's thought. It would also have been possible, of course, to arrange them thematically, for example, but this would have resulted in an obscuring of some of the conceptual evolutions of Zürcher's work. The first paper reproduced below appeared in 1977, "Late Han Vernacular Elements in the Earliest Buddhist Translations." Here Zürcher set the stage for his philological investigations of the grammar and vocabulary of the earliest Chinese translations which, as the title makes clear, he hypothesized preserved elements of vernacular usage. While aspects of his treatment of the theme, to which he returned on several occasions, have been subject to modification and adjustment, the overall idea has found wide acceptance. The following year, in 1978, Zürcher published his book-length Dutch translation of the *The Life of the Buddha*. While there is obviously little to be gained by a retranslation of Zürcher's Dutch into English—the text should certainly be translated, but directly from Chinese—I have felt the Introduction of sufficient interest to include here. Among other things, since there seemed little point in including any of the examples of general encyclopedic works which Zürcher wrote surveying Chinese Buddhism tout court, this contribution serves as a window into his synthetic vision of the Buddhist literary tradition, Buddhist cosmology as it relates to the Buddha's life story, and the like.

The following years were very productive ones for Zürcher, as he published in rapid succession "Buddhism in a Pre-modern Bureaucratic Empire: the Chinese experience," "Buddhist Influence on Early Daoism: A Survey of Scriptural Influence," "Eschatology and Messianism in Early Chinese Buddhism," and "'Prince Moonlight': Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism." The first of these is representative of his views of the integration of Buddhism into the entirety of the social fabric of Chinese society, here presented in a schematic fashion. The following papers are best read together, offering Zürcher's investigations of the literature of the contemporaneous Daoist traditions, and seeking therein clues to aspects of Buddhism otherwise hidden, the same being the goal of looking at 'apocryphal literature' shunned by the Buddhist monastic elite but evidently highly influential nonetheless. The piece "Perspectives in the Study of Chinese Buddhism" belongs to the same category as does "Buddhism in a Pre-modern Bureaucratic Empire," broadly speaking, namely as an attempt to place Buddhism in its overall Chinese environment. While the latter is a sort of annotated catalog of the aspects under which Buddhism became Sinicized, the former is a more synthetic exploration of three themes, as Zürcher puts it, namely "First, that our view of Chinese Buddhism as a historical phenomenon is greatly *obscured* by the abundance of our source materials. Second, that if we want to define what was the normal state of medieval Chinese Buddhism, we should concentrate on what seems to be *abnormal*. Third, if we want to complete our picture of what this Buddhism really was, we have to look outside Chinese Buddhism itself." One can see something of a deep objectification of Buddhism here, a feature which characterizes Zürcher's studies throughout, and one which subsequent scholarship has begun to problematize.

In his 1985 paper on "Mahā-Cīna: The Buddhist Reinterpretation of the History of China," Zürcher examines the ways in which the Chinese understood their own position in light of the challenge of an Indian Buddhist worldview, articulated both historically and cosmologically. Among the processes he traces are the integration of Buddhist assumptions with traditionally accepted Chinese notions, such that the former were found not, after all, to contradict the latter, something which was of course crucial for the acceptance of Buddhism as a meaningful partner is explaining the world. Buddhist history, in this sense, is Chinese history seen Buddhistically.

Several years later Zürcher published a paper which has flown under the radar, but which is impressive and convincing not only in its execution but in the breadth of its imagination. This is his 1989 "Buddhism and

Education in Tang Times." Here on the basis of Dunhuang manuscripts Zürcher explores what monks would have been expected to know, how they were educated, how writing and text copying took place and the like. There is now of course a great deal of work indeed on Dunhuang and the miraculous manuscript treasures discovered there, but Zürcher's work remains very interesting and important. In the same year Zürcher published "The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Culture in an Historical Perspective," the topic of which is fully explained by its title. In the following year appeared a frequently cited study, "Han Buddhism and the Western Regions," in which Zürcher attempted to bring together what was known about Buddhism during the Han dynasty, with particular focus on what he called "hybrid court Buddhism," canonical monastic Buddhism and "the diffuse and unsystematic adoption of Buddhist elements in indigenous beliefs and cults." A considerable amount of the evidence here has been called into question by recently scholarship, often stimulated, however, precisely by Zürcher's work. The same year saw the appearance of two papers issued together in a small booklet, lectures delivered in Paris and presented here as "The Spread of Buddhism and Christianity in Imperial China: Spontaneous Diffusion Versus Guided Propagation" and "Nuns and Convents in Old Chinese Buddhism." In the first of these Zürcher begins to develop his ideas about the similarities and differences between the ways in which Buddhism, beginning in the Han period, and Christianity in the 17th century were spread to China. This is a theme to which Zürcher was to return, and which represents a significant contribution to true comparative studies. The second paper addresses a topic very little addressed, namely the position of religious women in earlier Chinese Buddhism.

One year later Zürcher published a reconsideration of sūtra translations in "A New Look at the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Texts," bringing into focus linguistic and other issues surrounding their study. The publication of a Japanese translation of *The Buddhist Conquest of China* in 1993 gave him the opportunity to survey his own work in the years since the book was first published, and it included a Japanese version of his remarks. The English text presented here is his own text, never before published. It is interesting among other things for the light it sheds on the way Zürcher saw his articles are fitting into a continuing project. 1995 saw the appearance of a survey of works putatively known to Dao'an in 374, focusing on those which could not be attributed to known translators, "Obscure Texts on Favourite Topics: Dao'an's anonymous scriptures." Zürcher believed that this source allowed us "some glimpses" of "Buddhism at the sub-elite level." In the same year appeared "Buddhist Art in Medieval China: The

Ecclesiastical View," in which Buddha images and those of other figures, wall paintings and other representations are surveyed in their doctrinal and social context. This very stimulating piece, written of course from a highly textual but also art-historically sensitive standpoint, makes one sincerely wish that Zürcher had devoted more of his attentions to such subjects.

"Vernacular Elements in Early Buddhist Texts: An Attempt to Define the Optimal Source Materials," published in 1996, returns to the grammatical interests of Zürcher's earlier work, and can be seen as in some sense a set of notes toward a future grammar of Buddhist Chinese. Several years later in 1999 he published "Buddhism Across Boundaries: The Foreign Input," another attempt to survey what can be known, and what not known, of early Buddhism in China and the roles of those who transported the tradition, and those who adopted it, with the gaze fixed firmly on the foreign monks who labored to introduce Buddhism in a new land. This is Zürcher's last major contribution on this topic.

In "Xu Guangqi and Buddhism," published in 2001, we see that Zürcher's interests have shifted to Christianity in China, though the large-scale topic explored earlier, namely the similarities and differences between the introduction and adoption of Buddhism and the experience of Jesuit Christianity, remains clearly in focus. In Xu Guangqi Zürcher finds a Chinese Christian who criticized Buddhism, which he blames for failing to decrease depravity and increase virtue. As a Chinese convert Xu's views are particularly interesting in the context of questions surrounding the adoption of foreign traditions, in this case Christianity, seen against a backdrop of fully sincized Buddhism.

In the following year Zürcher turned for a final time to earlier periods of Buddhism in China in "Tidings from the South: Chinese Court Buddhism and International Relations in the Fifth Century CE." Here the role of traders is of utmost importance, though in contrast to the earlier overland traders along with whom Buddhism apparently entered China in the Han dynasty, it is now those who ply the seas who are most important. As Zürcher points out, when China is unified under the Sui dynasty at the end of the period he surveys in this paper, the pendulum shifts back toward Central Asia, with the rise of Turkic and Tibetan power.

The final research paper reproduced here is 2006's "Buddhist *Chanhui* and Christian Confession in Seventeenth-Century China." Here the comparison between Buddhism and Christianity focuses on rites of repentance and contrition. The article can serve as a sort of model for a way in which

comparative studies, which run the serious risk of incommensurability, might be successfully and meaningfully accomplished.

A small number of book reviews—Zürcher seems not to have liked the genre very much—round off the volume. The books he chose to comment on, however, reveal important aspects of his program. The first review considers Richard Robinson's *Early Mādhyamika in India and China*, which centers around Sengzhao and Madhyamaka thought in fifth century China. The Buddhological contributions to the extremely influential volumes of *Mélanges de sinologie offerts à Monsieur Paul Demiéville* draw forth the breadth of Zürcher's knowledge, while his consideration of Timothy Brook's *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China* brings him into early Modern times, demonstrating that his attentions in this period were not narrowly limited to the role of Christianity in Chinese society. We already noticed above in one of Zürcher's last essays the theme of repentance and contrition, and his careful evaluation of Kuo Li-ying's *Confession et Contrition dans le bouddhisme chinois du V^e^ au X^e^ siècle* fits into this same domain of concern. Finally, bringing us back to the earliest days of Chinese Buddhism, ending at the beginning, as it were, the last item in this volume is Zürcher's review of Antonino Forte's *The Hostage An Shigao and his Offspring*, which Zürcher, it should be noted, found more convincing in its main hypothesis than have some others.

Few scholars have contributed as much to the study of Buddhism in China, particularly in its earlier periods, as did Erik Zürcher. It is thus not only fitting as a tribute to a great scholar, but also important for the future progress of the field, that his works receive careful attention. It is my earnest hope that the papers assembled here will stimulate further work on the question already noticed by Zürcher, and that more importantly, they will raise in their turn new questions for a new generation of scholars to struggle with. This, I am quite sure, would be the result of greatest satisfaction to Prof. Zürcher himself.

Publications on Buddhism of Erik Zürcher (*Xu Lihe* 許理和/许理和)

Contributions reproduced in the present volume (some of which are translated anew here) are marked in **bold** in the list below.

1959

1. "Zum Verhältnis von Kirche und Staat in China während der Frühzeit des Buddhismus." *Saeculum* 10/1: 73–81.
2. ***The Buddhist Conquest of China:*** *the Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*. Sinica Leidensia 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill: 1959; 2nd ed. 1972; 3rd ed. 2007, with a new Foreword by Stephen Teiser, pp. xiii–xxxvii).

   2-a: Japanese: Ēriku Churuhyā エーリク・チュルヒャー, *Bukkyō no Chūgoku Denrai* 仏教の中国伝来. Trans. Tanaka Sumio 田中純男, Watarai Akira 渡会顕, Naruse Yoshinori 成瀬良徳, Tanaka Fumio 田中文雄. (Tokyo: Serika shobō せりか書房, 1995).

   > **With a new preface** (*jobun* 序文) by Zürcher dated Dec. 1993, pp. 9–16.
   >
   > Reviewed: Hirai Yukei 平井宥慶, *Buzan gakuhō* 豊山学報 40 (1997): 186–195.

   2-b: Chinese: *Fojiao zhengfu Zhongguo: Fojiao zai Zhongguo zhonggu zaoqi de chuanbo yu shiying* 佛教征服中國: 佛教在中國中古早期的傳播與適應. Trans. Li Silong 李四龍, Pei Yong 裴勇, et al. Haiwai Zhongguo yanjiu congshu 海外中国研究叢書. Nanjing 南京: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe 江蘇人民出版社, 1998, 2003, 2005.

   2-c: Partial translations into Korean by P'yo Chŏnghun 表晶勛 and Choi Yun-sik remain unpublished.

   2-d: Reviews: Hans Steininger, "Der Buddhismus in der chinesischen Geschichte (Zu den Arbeiten von *E. Zürcher, J. Gernet* und *A. F. Wright*)." *Saeculum* 13 (1962): 132–165 (esp. 133–143); Paul Demiéville, *T'oung Pao*, 2nd Series 47/3–5 (1959): 430–435; Edward Conze, *The Middle Way* 34 (1960): 173–176; Leon Hurvitz, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80/3 (1960): 277–279; Giuseppe Tucci, *East and West* 11/4 (1960): 295–296; Jacques Gernet, *Journal Asiatique* 248 (1960): 408–410; Arthur F. Wright, *Journal of Asian Studies* 20/4 (1961): 517–520; Janusz Chmielewski, *Rocznik Orientalistczny* 25/2 (1961): 140–144; Conrad M. Schirokauer, *American Historical Review* 67/1 (1961): 139–140; K[atherine] P[o] K[an] Whitaker, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 24/3 (1961): 599–600; T[imoteus] Pokora, *Archiv Orientální* 29 (1961): 172–

174; G[alene] E[ugene] Sargent, *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 57/1–2 (1962): 82–85; André Bareau, *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 50/2 (1962): 564–569; J[aroslav] Prusek, *Central Asiatic Journal* 8/1 (1963): 67–70; 2nd edition: W[erner] Eichhorn, *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 71/5 (1976): 509–510; Chuang Shen, *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 13 (1974): 175–178; Zhuang Shen 莊申, *Xianggang Zhongwen daxue zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 香港中文大学中国文化研究所学報 / *Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong* 8/1 (1974): 365–367; 1975 Tzevi Shiprin, *HaMizrah hehadaš* / New East, Quarterly of the Israel Oriental Society 1–2 (97–98) (1975): 128–129.

1961

3. *Het Boeddhisme: ontstaan en verbreiding in kaart, woord en beeld*. Beknopte geschiedenissen van wereldgodsdiensten. Dutch trans. by Max Schuchart (Amsterdam: De Brug–Djambatan).
   3-a. English: *Buddhism: its origin and spread in words, maps and pictures* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1962).
   3-b: Danish: *Buddhismen. Dens oprindelse og udbredelse i tekst, kort og billeder* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1962).
   3-c: Swedish: *Buddhismen: ursprung och utbredning* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1962).

1964

4. "Inleiding," "China" and "Vertaling van enkele Zen-teksten." In F. Vos and E. Zürcher, *Spel zonder snaren. Enige beschouwingen over Zen* (Deventer: Uitgeverij N. Kluwer).
5. 'Buddhism in China." In Raymond Dawson (ed.), *The Legacy of China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press): 56–79.
   5-a. Dutch: "Het boeddhisme in China." In Raymond Dawson (ed.), *De Chinese Traditie*. Chinese Biblioteek. Studies en Teksten 3 (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij de Arbeiderspers, 1973): 68–90. Trans. C. E. van Amerongen-van Straten.

1968

6. "The Yüeh-chih and Kaniṣka in the Chinese Sources." In A.L. Basham, ed., *Papers on the Date of Kaniṣka, Submitted to the Conference on the Date of Kaniṣka, London, 20–22 April, 1960*. Australian National University Centre of Oriental Studies, Oriental Monograph Series 4 (Leiden: E.J. Brill): 346–390.

1977

7. “**Late Han Vernacular Elements in the Earliest Buddhist Translations**.” *Journal of Chinese Language Teachers Association* 12: 177–203. 7-a. Chinese: “Zuizao de fojing yiwen zhong de Donghan kouyu chengfen” 最早的佛經譯文中的東漢口語成分. Trans. Jiang Shaoyu 蔣紹愚. *Yuyanxue luncong* 語言學論叢 14 (1987): 197–225.[15] Revised version by Jiang Shaoyu 蔣紹愚 and Wu Juan 吳娟, in Zhu Qingzhi 朱慶之, ed., *Fojiao Hanyu yanjiu* 佛教漢語研究 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 2009): 75–112.

1978

8. ***Het leven van de Boeddha***. De Oosterse bibliotheek 10 (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff).

   Illustrations credited to Sjef Nix (Zürcher himself). Translation of *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經 and *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經.

1980

9. “**Buddhism in a Pre-modern Bureaucratic Empire: the Chinese experience**.” In A. K. Narain, ed., *Studies in the History of Buddhism. Papers Presented at the International Conference on the History of Buddhism at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, WIS, USA, August 19–21, 1976* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation): 401–411.
10. “**Buddhist Influence on Early Daoism: A Survey of Scriptural Influence**.” *T'oung Pao* 66: 84–117.

1981

11. “**Eschatology and Messianism in Early Chinese Buddhism**.” In Wilt Idema, ed., *Leyden Studies in Sinology: Papers Presented at the Conference Held in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Sinological Institute of Leyden University, December 8–12, 1980* (Leiden: E. J. Brill): 34–56.

[15] See: Chen Xiulan 陳秀蘭, “Dui Xu Lihe jiaoshou ‘Zuizao de fojing yiwenzhong de Donghan kouyu chengfen’ yiwen de jidian buchong” 對許理和教授《最早的佛經譯文中的東漢口語成分》一文的幾點補充, in *Guhanyu yanjiu* 古漢語研究 2 (1997): 55–57. More recently, Zhang Chunxiu 张春秀, “Dui Xu Lihe jiaoshou ‘Zuizao de fojing yiwenzhong de Donghan kouyu chengfen’ yiwen de zaibuchong” 对许理和教授《最早的佛经译文中的东汉口语成分》一文的再补充, in *Hechi xueyuan xuebao* 河池学院学报 28/1 (2008).

1982

12. "'**Prince Moonlight': Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism**." *T'oung Pao* 68: 1–75.
13. "**Perspectives in the Study of Chinese Buddhism**." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1982: 161–176.
14. "Chinese Chan and Confucianism." In H. Brinker, R. P. Kramers, C. Ouwehand, eds., *Zen in China, Japan, East Asian Art*. Swiss Asian Studies. Research Studies 8 (Bern: Peter Lang): 29–46.

1984

15. "'Beyond the Jade Gate': Buddhism in China, Vietnam and Korea." In Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, eds., *The World of Buddhism* (New York: Facts on File. Reprint: NY: Thames and Hudson, 1995): 193–211.
    15-a. German: "Buddhismus in China, Korea und Vietnam." *Der Buddhismus: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1989): 215–251. Trans. Siglinde Dietz.

1985

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LATE HAN VERNACULAR ELEMENTS IN THE EARLIEST BUDDHIST TRANSLATIONS

Between 148 CE, the year in which the first known translator of Buddhist texts, the Parthian missionary An Shigao 安世高, arrived in the Later Han capital of Luoyang, and the final downfall of the Han dynasty in 220 CE, about a dozen foreign Buddhist masters, assisted by their Chinese or sinicized assistants, are known to have produced a considerable number of religious texts for the benefit of their Chinese converts. As far as we know, all these texts originated from the metropolitan area, the seat of the embryonic "Church of Luoyang".

It goes without saying that these first glimpses of what was to become one of the greatest religious and cultural forces in Far Eastern history have whetted the appetite of a great number of scholars in East and West; in fact, no period in the history of Chinese Buddhism has been studied more intensively. However, research into Later Han Buddhism is frustrated by the extreme poverty of primary historical information in the usual sense of the phrase; some short references in historical literature, a handful of early colophons and prefaces, a small number of entries in early bibliographical and biographical sources—altogether hardly enough to fill two of these pages. They have been digested by generations of scholars to such an extent that we cannot hope to gain any new insights; every drop of information has been squeezed out of them.

Some years ago I therefore made the attempt to approach the embryonic phase of Chinese Buddhism from another angle by turning to the only other thing we have: a body of crude, archaic versions of Buddhist scriptures dating from the Later Han period, and which, surprisingly enough, have never been made the subject of serious historical research.[1]

[1] They have never been used as materials for linguistic and stylistic analysis, and only very rarely for the study of the social and religious life of the late second and early third century CE. On the other hand, much attention has been given to the bibliographic aspects and the related problem of authenticity (e.g. Tokiwa Daijō 1938 and Hayashiya Tomojirō 1941), and recently Ui Hakujü 宇井伯寿 has even produced a richly annotated Japanese version of a number of translations attributed to An Shigao in his *Yakkyō shi kenkyū* 譯經史研究 (Tōkyō, 1972).

In doing so, I have tried to analyze the lexico-syntactic, terminological, and stylistic features of these texts and to draw some conclusions as to the social and ideological milieu in which those scriptures were produced. The approach is at best a devious one (it is, after all, like studying the social and religious life of Jacobean England by analyzing the language and style of the King James Version), but under the circumstances it is the only course left to us.

Elsewhere[2] I hope to report more extensively on the conclusions of this more comprehensive topic of research. In this paper I shall confine myself to the most basic aspect of the materials used: the fact that they consist of a very particular kind of written Chinese that can be studied, analyzed, and compared with other types of contemporary written idiom. The fundamental problem will therefore not be the value of these texts in the perspective of the social and religious history of the Later Han period, but one which is at least as tantalizing: the question of how far the language of this "marginal" literature, produced far outside the traditional cultural élite of scholar-officials, reflects the metropolitan vernacular of the second century CE.

Our first step should evidently be a severe selection of the materials on the basis of both internal and external evidence. This is by no means superfluous. The modern standard edition of the Chinese Buddhist Canon (*Taishō Issaikyō* 大正一切經, 55 vols., Tōkyō 1924–1929, hereafter abbreviated T) contains no less than 96 so-called "Han scriptures", 78 of which are attributed to the small number of known Han translators. However, both bibliographical data and internal features of style and terminology prove that in the vast majority of cases we have to do with late and quite unreliable attributions. For the details of the process of selection I may again refer to my forthcoming study; here it may suffice to mention the basic criteria and operations: (1) exclusion of all attributions made later than the fourth century CE; (2) use of corroborating external evidence (colophons, early glosses, etc.); (3) the identification of certain "landmarks" (a few texts of truly unquestionable authenticity); (4) terminological and stylistic analysis of those "landmarks" in order to determine a number of features peculiar to certain translators or translation teams; (5) re-examination of the works left over after (1) in the light of the results of (4). This selection has yielded a body of 29 texts that may safely be regarded

[2] In my article "A new approach to the earliest Chinese Buddhist translations", to be published in *T'oung Pao*.

[178] as genuine Han translations made at Luoyang between ca. 150 CE and ca. 220 CE by five different translation teams—altogether a considerable mass of textual materials, corresponding to about one-third of the present *Hou Han shu* 後漢書. In this article I shall refrain from any detailed discussion of the nature and attribution of these texts; only titles and *Taishō* references have been listed in Appendix B.

If we take a closer look at the language of these curious and sometimes very obscure texts, the first thing that strikes us is its obvious divergence from "standard classical Chinese"—say, the language of the biographical chapters of the *Hou Han shu* 後漢書. The scriptures are teeming with "vulgarisms" that are only occasionally found in secular works. In general, syntactic patterns are simple and artless, and the vocabulary is rather limited. We observe an extreme frequency of binomes coupled with what seem to be well-defined word-classes (觀見 "to see"; 喜樂 "to have fun"; 宮殿 "palace"; 還復 "again") and a great number of verbal compounds (送出 "to send out"; 捨去 "to reject")—features that suggest that this idiom was, and was intended to be, understandable to a listening audience (this is, incidentally, confirmed by external evidence; in fact, our only Han-time account of a Buddhist ceremony speaks of large crowds gathered to *listen* to the scriptures). In some scriptures (notably the earliest ones) this "scriptural idiom" virtually dominates the whole text; in other cases we find various degrees of *wenyan* 文言 admixtures. But the most important fact is the striking regularity of the idiom; in even the most "polished" products we find the same basic features such as a strong reduction of forms in the pronominal system, the frequent use of "plural" suffixes, the comparative rarity of the nominal sentence with 也, and a great many other points by which it deviates from the largely standardized *wenyan* of the same period.

This having been said, it must be emphasized that it would be a gross oversimplification to regard this scriptural idiom as "Late Han vernacular, metropolitan dialect". Of course we have to consider various distorting factors. In the first place, it must be assumed that the language has been deeply affected by being written down in a script that since centuries had functioned as a vehicle of a largely artificial monosyllabic literary medium. Secondly, in some cases, the Indian original may have exerted a disturbing influence, especially at the syntactic level.[3] Thirdly, there are

[3] One clear example of syntactic distortion caused by the Sanskrit or Prākrit original is the use of the vocative, very frequent in both Indian and Chinese Buddhist texts, but

many cases in which prosodic features—notably a marked preference for a four-syllable pattern—lead to various kinds of distortion. Finally, the language of some texts may just be "very bad Chinese", a kind of Serindian Pidgin used by a foreign master with inadequate native assistance. Little can be done to neutralize the influence of the first distorting factor. There are many cases in our text where monosyllabic forms alternate with binomes without any perceptible semantic difference (e.g. 明, 光 and 光明; 民 and 人民; 樂 and 娛樂), and it is hard to say to what extent such monosyllabic variants are reduced forms caused by artificial stylization. I shall revert to this problem in the section on lexical composition. As to the second disturbing factor, it should be stressed that the archaic translations, especially in their narrative parts, are very free; the distorting influence of the Sanskrit or Prākrit original seems to be limited to a few clearly definable areas. In some rare cases a whole text can be compared with the Indian original, but even if the original is no longer extant, we can very often check the Chinese rendering of certain literary clichés against the absolutely stereotyped Indian forms (the opening and closing formulas of scriptures, the standard description of the four stages of meditation, formulas of address and greeting, conventional accounts of certain miraculous signs, etc.). In all such cases it appears that the original formulas have been rendered by rough approximations in which there is no sign of distortion due to the Indian original. The third factor, artificial reduction or expansion caused by the tendency to impose a four-syllable prosodic pattern upon the text, may be a serious source of disturbance. There are, however, many texts in which this danger does not exist, since they show no trace of any attempt at rhythmization. As a matter of principle, in the following analysis no feature has been included if it is not corroborated by evidence from clearly non-prosodic texts. Finally, the chance that some peculiarities of the language may be due to the translator's or redactor's ignorance or personal idiosyncrasies has been neutralized by excluding lexical and grammatical features that occur in the works of only one translator or translation team.

A final proof of the largely vernacular nature of the Han scriptural idiom is furnished by the findings of modern research in Chinese historical

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rather uncommon in Chinese literary prose, where it invariably is placed in isolation at the beginning of the sentence. The Chinese redactors seem to have been at a loss where to place the vocative, and very often inserted it awkwardly somewhere in the first part of a sentence, thereby giving rise to monstrosities like 如是舍利佛一切諸法 . . . "and so, Śāriputra, all dharmas . . .".

linguistics. Of particular importance have been W. A. C. H. Dobson's *Late Han Chinese* (Toronto, 1964), the only monographic treatment of the language of the period, the monumental study by Ushijima Tokuji 牛島徳次 on the language of the early medieval period: *Kango bumpō ron: chūko*
[179] *hen* 漢語文法論 (中古編) (Tōkyō, 1971), and various studies on the language of the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語.[4] It is to be regretted that these scholars, in spite of their endeavour to gain some insight into the development of the living language, have mainly concentrated on what essentially are "high-class" literary sources in which vernacular elements *occasionally* are used, especially in passages expressing direct speech, and that they made no use of Buddhist marginal literature at all. In general, however, their findings are fully corroborated by the Buddhist scriptural idiom: the early Buddhist materials not only contain the features noted by Dobson and Ushijima: they do so to a much greater extent, and hence contain far more clues on contemporary vernacular speech than any secular text does. The general congruity between the findings of historical linguists working with secular materials and the results of my own analysis confirms the working hypothesis that those archaic Buddhist scriptures[5]—and particularly the least "polished" ones—form a somewhat formalized but nevertheless closer reflexion of the living language of second century Luoyang.

Being a historian rather than a professional linguist, I shall not attempt to present a comprehensive model of description covering the whole grammatical system; the main purpose of this article is to draw attention to this untapped mine of information and to stimulate its use by professional linguists. For that purpose it will be sufficient to present six sample topics dealing with (1) lexical composition; (2) the use of verbal complements; (3) changes in the pronominal system; (4) the use of some "empty words": *er* 而, *yu* 於 and *zhe* 者; (5) the use of enclitic *-gu* 故; (6) *wéi* 爲 and *zuo* 作.

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4 Notably Yoshikawa Kōjirō (1939) and Zhan Xiuhui (1973).

5 The term "archaic" is here used with reference to the history of Chinese Buddhism, and has of course nothing to do with "archaic Chinese". It should be stressed that in studying the Buddhist material as a source of information on the vernacular language one should concentrate on the earliest (2nd–3rd century) translations, dating from a period when this type of religious literature was still a new development without any well-established literary tradition to rely on. At a later stage (possibly already in the late fourth century) the medium petrified and became a kind of "sacred language" divorced from the living speech of the period. Occasionally some use has been made of such later Buddhist texts (cf. Yoshikawa 1958 and Nishitani 1958) for linguistic and stylistic analysis.

I intentionally did not include phonology. At first sight, the hundreds of transcribed proper names and Buddhist technical terms, ranging from simple forms like 比丘 (*bhikṣu*) and 僧 (*saṅgha*) to such monstrosities as 菩薩摩訶薩摩訶衍僧那僧涅 (*bodhisattva-mahāsattva-mahāyāna-saṃnāha-saṃnaddha*), should yield first-hand reliable information about the pronunciation of Late Han Chinese of the metropolitan area, and they have, in fact, been used for that purpose.[6] I have refrained from doing so here, mainly because I feel that early Buddhist transcriptions can at best be used as a secondary tool, corroborating (or invalidating) certain conclusions reached by other ways and means. Their value as an autonomous source of information is greatly reduced by a whole range of obscuring factors, such as (1) our ignorance as to the original language on which the transcriptions are based, which may be Sanskrit, any kind of Prākrit, or even some Central Asian idiom; (2) the distortion caused by the way in which those terms were pronounced by the foreign missionary (who may have been a Parthian, Khotanese of Sogdian); (3) the very imperfect way in which the recipients—the Chinese assistants who noted down the translation—may perceived those alien sounds; (4) the necessity to break down the foreign word into a number of Chinese-type monosyllables irrespective of the original structure of the word, and to render them in Chinese characters; (5) the rather primitive nature of the earliest attempts at transcription if compared to the much more refined and diversified systems that were developed by later schools of translation.

A. *Lexical Composition*[7]

A single glance at any archaic Chinese Buddhist text will show that the language is teeming with lexical compounds, generally composed of two syllables (there are examples of trisyllabic compounds such as 壞散去 "disintegrated", but they are very rare). Our texts contain more than a thousand different compounds, about one quarter of which are of frequent occurrence (being found at least five times in texts of different translators).[8]

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6 Notably by E. G. Pulleyblank (1962).

7 [Zürcher's list of references to individual items has been integrated into the body of the article—JAS.]

8 Lexical composition is treated at length by Ushijima (1971), pp. 40–44; the frequent use of binomes is mentioned as one of the characteristics of *Shishuo xinyu* by Yoshikawa (1939), p. 135. Zhan Xiuhui (1973), pp. 483–503, presents a long list of hundreds of "binomes" that

One of the most striking phenomena, clearly related to the use of lexical compounds, is the emergence of word-classes.[9] In general, we can distinguish three types: (a) *verbal compounds* (characterized by the possible use of verbal complements and adverbial determination),[10] such as 悲哀 "to mourn", 歡喜 "to rejoice", 姝好 "to be beautiful", 發動 "to activate"; (b) *nominal compounds* (which exclusively occur in the positions of subject and direct or indirect object) such as 舍宅 "house", 知識 "acquaintance", 處所 "place", 形體 "body", 人民 "people"; and (c) *adverbial compounds* (which exclusively occur in pre-verbal position and following the subject such as 都盧 "all", 身自 "personally", "together", and 爾乃 "then".

As far as binomes are concerned, these word-classes seem to be very clearly defined, and even in the use of monosyllabic forms we do not find erratic constructions like 弟之 "regard one as one's younger brother" or 四
[180] in the sense of "on all sides". In the light of our material we should definitely regard such expressions as products of artificial stylization without any counterpart in the living language.

The second striking feature is the fact that so many binomes are reversible. About fifty lexical compounds (of all three classes mentioned above) occur in the variant forms AB and BA, in most cases without any perceptible semantic difference, although there is generally a marked preference for one of the two forms (in the examples underlined). Thus we find, among the verbal compounds, e.g. 長養 vs. 養長 "to nurture"; 照明 vs. 明照 "to be bright"; 淨潔 vs. 潔淨 "to be pure; 索盡 vs. 盡索 "to complete;

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occur in the *Shishuo xinyu*. It is evident that the formation of bisyllabic compounds in the vernacular language deeply influenced early medieval literary Chinese (3rd–6th century), and our texts confirm that this process was in full swing in Late Han times. It is included by Dobson among the distinctive features of Late Han literary Chinese (Dobson (1964), p. 100; unfortunately without further elaboration). In the following I have concentrated upon compounds clearly consisting of two morphemes, each of which retains its recognizable semantic content within the compound: either binomes consisting of semantically analogous elements (type 叫胡, 喜樂) or of contrasting elements (type 大小, 多少), or repetitive-distributive compounds (type 家家, 世世). Ushijima's second category (1971, p. 44: "determinative compounds" of the type 虎視, 後園, 前庭) seems to me too ill-defined, and his third category (compounds having ～然, ～若 or ～爾 as their second element) appears to be grammatical rather than lexical. Zhan Xiuhui's list also includes a great number of determinative compounds (like 玉樹 "jade tree") that are excluded here.

[9] Cf. Dobson (1964) p. 101: "... the single word of LAC tends to be replaced by the compound word in Late Han and the compound word tends to greater restriction in grammatical deployment. Words customarily occur in either nounal or verbal position, and do not permutate".

[10] The possibility of negation by means of 不 directly preceding the word still appears to be a most watertight criterium to separate the verbal and adverbial compounds from the nominal compounds, the latter being negated by 非, 不爲, 非爲, 非是, or [將]無是.

亡失 vs. 失亡 "to lose"; among nominal compounds we find e.g. 家室 vs. 室家 "house"; 塵垢 vs. 垢塵 "dust"; 盜賊 vs. 賊盜 "robber; and adverbial compounds e.g. 皆悉 vs. 悉皆 "all", and 身自 vs. 自身 "oneself". This flexibility suggests that in the third century CE lexical composition still was in a productive and formative stage, in which many compounds had not yet frozen into their later, fixed forms.[11]

A closer look at the 1080 binomes occurring in our texts shows that in a great number of cases we can distinguish two structural principles. We find a limited set of elements (17 in all) that very often occur in the *A* position in a compound, and rarely or never in the *B* position, and an equally limited number of other elements (28) that regularly form the second number of a binome, and rarely or never the first member. In all such cases, these elements are morphemes of a very general meaning, denoting e.g. movement in a certain direction; separation and rejection; successful completion; starting an action; general emotions such as joy or fear. It appears that in these ca. 230 binomes the structural principles involved are either determination of a "generic" element B by a preceding semantically more specific element A (type 搖動 "swayingly to move", cf. 傾動, 轉動, 發動, 移動, 感動; 動 rarely in first position), or the reverse: a "generic" element A specified by a following element B that has a more restricted meaning (type 思慮 "ponder—as a way of mental activity", cf. 思議, 思念, 思欲, 思想, 思惟; no case of 思 in second position in our texts). Among such generic elements I may mention as particularly productive ～持 expressing "holding, keeping", ～得 "successful completion", ～除 and ～捨 "elimination", and ～獲 "holding, keeping" (all in second position); 成 "accomplishment", 增 "increase", 解 "setting free, clearing" (all in first position).

There are no signs of enclitic second elements (like 子, 兒, 頭 in modern speech); the use of ～子 is frequent, but always refers to animate entities (赤子, 兒子, 狗子, 獅子, 蟆子 etc.).[12]

Contrastive binomes are rather frequent (e.g. 多少 "to a certain degree"; 遠近; 長短 "to find fault with", etc.); they are irreversible.

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[11] Reversibility of compounds is not mentioned by Ushijima (1971).

[12] However, among the 18 examples of ～子 given by Ushijima (1971), p. 51, there are some that do refer to inanimate objects, such as 刀子 "little knife" and 帖子 "writing slip". Some more examples in Wang Li (1958), pp. 225–227. Ushijima's examples of ～兒 all refer to children or to persons of inferior status; according to Wang Li (1958), p. 229 enclitic ～兒 as a diminutive suffix referring to inanimate objects is not attested in pre-Tang sources, as is also concluded by Ōta (1958) p. 90.

Of the many *repetitive compounds* a few are used in the impressionistic way so well known from classical Chinese *fu* poetry: 巍巍 "mightly"; 黔黔 "swaying to and fro"; 忽忽 "hurriedly". However, in the vast majority of cases repetitive compounds have distributive meaning ("one by one", "each for oneself" etc.).

Some examples:

諸姊各各還宮!	"Sisters, go back to the palace, each of you!" (T 184 [III] 471a4)
都雨種種華	"(The Gods) rained down various kinds of flowers" (T 224 [VIII] 474c21)
世世行作功德	"In each (successive) life he performs good works" (T 224 [VIII] 476b6–7)
家家行乞食	"He goes begging for food from house to house" (T 418 [XIII] 919a25)

The most conspicuous difference from standard *wenyan*, as far as lexical composition is concerned, is to be found in the very frequent use of *adverbial compounds*.[13] We can distinguish at least six types:

(l) *Reflexive*: apart from 自 determining the verb (frequent), both "self" and "(by) oneself" are expressed by the compounds 身自, 自身 and the emphatic 還自 ("even . . . himself", referring to an unexpected situation).

E.G.

何能身自知之?	"How could I know that (by) myself?" (T 458 [XIV] 437b1)
自身所有好物	"The beautiful things in his own possession" (T 624 [XV] 357b25–26)
[181] 還自取幻師噉	"(like a phantom that) devours the very magician (who created it)" (T 350 [XII] 191a20)
還自觀心之法	"Contemplate the *dharmas* even in your own mind" (T 626 [XV] 403a20)
還自燒身	"He actually burnt his own body" (T 626 [XV] 403b16)

[13] Yoshikawa (1930) has already noted the frequency of such compounds in the language of the *Shishuo xinyu*. Ushijima (1971) gives many more examples (e.g. pp. 183–184: 乃今, 乃自, 亦乃, 方乃, 乃方; pp. 205–207: 一皆, 悉皆, 皆悉, 咸共, 咸悉, 並皆). Dobson (1964) occasionally mentions some adverbial compounds (e.g. 每輒 p. 30: 交相 p. 49: 躬自, 自身, 身自 p. 51) but he does not draw attention to the phenomenon as such.

(2) *Reciprocal*: 相 "each other" or "one in relation to the other" (frequent) is occasionally expanded into 轉相; beside (相)與 "jointly, with each other", we find 共相, 共同, 同共 and 與共.

人民 . . . 轉相灌注	"The people pour (that water) over each other" (T 313 [XI] 755c27)
轉相因緣故	"It is because (past, present and future) determine each other" (T 1508 [XXV] 53b10)
相與娛樂	"They amused themselves together" (T418 [XIII] 905a12)
人民但共同快樂	"The people are just happy together" (T 313 [XI] 756b16–17)
同共安樂	"They are contented together" (T 313 [XI] 757b22)
與共相見	"With each other (they went) to meet (the Buddha)" (T 418 [XIII] 913a16)
共相聞娛樂	"They amuse themselves together" (T 224 [VIII] 471c24–25)

(3) *Iterative* ("once more", "again") and *continuative* ("furthermore", "likewise"); striking and puzzling is the near-absence of 又. It is almost completely replaced by 復,[14] with the expanded (and no doubt more emphatic) forms 亦復, 加復 and 還復.

我曹亦復聞佛說經	"We have also (on our part) heard the Buddha explain the scriptures" (T 350 [XII] 193c5–6)
我亦復欲與汝共行	"I also want to go with you" (T 224 [VIII] 472c26)
今我一身, 加復貧窮	"Now I am alone, and, moreover, poor and destitute" (T 224 [VIII] 472b4)
今復還聞是法	"Now we have again listened to his doctrine" (T 626 [XV] 405c18–19)

The compounds 又復 and 復次 both serve to express "furthermore, moreover". However, they do not occur in the adverbial position, but as introductory elements determining the whole sentence and hence preceding the agent or person(s) addressed:

[14] Extremely frequent; often its iterative and continuative force has been lost, and in many cases it means little more than "and (then . . .)" in a continuing narrative. Dobson (1964), p. 25 remarks that it "occurs with such high frequency in Late Han, occasionally parasitically, that it might be considered peculiarly characteristic of Late Han". The same holds good for early medieval literary Chinese, (cf. Yoshikawa (1939) p. 131, and Ushijima (1971) pp. 227–228, who also lists a number of compounds). It should also be noted that in Late Han Buddhist Chinese the final particle . . . 矣 has become obsolete, and that the classical "negation + . . . 矣", expressing "not any more", has been taken over by 不復 . . . (or 無復, 莫復, 非復) followed by a verbal predicate.

又復理家在家修道 . . .	"Moreover, if a householder practices the Way at home . . ."	(T 322 [XII] 16a28)
又復諸比丘 . . .	"Again, O monks . . ."	(T 792 [XVII] 737a9)
復次舍利弗 . . .	"Furthermore, O Śāriputra . . ."	(T 313 [XI] 760b3)

(4) *Inclusive* ("all", referring either to the agent, or to the object, or to both): apart from the monosyllabic forms (悉, 皆, 都, occasionally 盡) we find a great number of binominal compounds in adverbial position: 皆悉, 都悉, 悉皆, 都皆, 都盡:[15]

	皆悉除愈	"(Diseases) are all cured"	(T 184 [III] 464a25)
	悉皆受折	"(His opponents) were all beaten by him"	(T 184 [III] 466a1–2)
	都皆墮三十七品經中	"(Those teachings) are all comprised within the 37 classes of scriptures"	(T 602 [XV] 172c4–5)
[182]	都悉來會	"They all came to the meeting"	(T 184 [III] 461a14)
	佛聲音都盧現如是	"The Buddha's sounds are all manifested in this way"	(T 224 [VIII] 471c2–3)
	都盧悉取一一塵 . . .	"(And if) he takes all (those particles of) dust one by one . . ."	(T 418 [XIII] 907c24–25)
	都盧不過是四事	"All that does not go beyond these four things"	(T 602 [XV] 171a17)

The compound 一切 (very frequent) is not only adverbial, but has a wide range of functions: (a) as an inclusive adverb (referring to either agent or object), (b) as an independent agent or object, and (c) as a determinative.[16]

(a)	相師一切稱壽無量	"The soothsayers all wished him endless life"	(T 184 [III] 467c1–2)
	一切無有一處 . . .	"There is not a single place (in his body) . . ."	(T 13 [I] 234b22–23)
	一切已脫著中去	"He is already released from all bounds"	(T 350 [XII] 194a13–14)

[15] The remarkable bisyllabic expression *dulu*, certainly borrowed from "vulgar" speech, is not mentioned by Ushijima and is therefore probably not attested in the early medieval literary sources which form his material. Zhang Xiang (1954) p. 366, gives several late examples, the earliest of which are drawn from Tang poetry.

[16] Ushijima (1971) p. 212 gives two examples, both adverbial. Dobson (1964) p. 24, has only found 一切 in the sense of "momentary", and adds the remark "It would be of interest to know when the shift of *yiqie* 一切 "momentary" → "the entire, the whole" takes place". In Late Han Buddhist texts it is quite common in its modern meaning: here again we see that the language of early Buddhist narrative is much closer to the Late Han vernacular than any kind of secular literature of the period.

(b) 一切皆悉就坐 “All went to their seats” (T 626 [XV] 400a7)
愍傷一切 “He had pity upon all of them” (T 184 [III] 463a19–20)

(c) 一切諸魔 “All demons” (T 418 [XIII] 903b26–27)
一切諸所有 “Whatever exists” (T 626 [XV] 390b27)
一切惡悉斷 “All evil has been cut off” (T 350 [XII] 191c29)

(5) *Distributive* (“each”, “one by one”): beside 各 (frequent) we find the bisyllabic forms 各自 and 各各.

各自取刀處處刺身 “They each took a knife and stabbed their bodies everywhere” (T 224 [VIII] 474c6)
各各從異國土來 “They each came from a different realm” (T 280 [XV] 445a13)

(6) *Intensive*: beside the common adverbial intensives 甚 and 大 (occassionally also 極 and very rarely 至, in a *wenyan* context), the compound 甚大 is often used.

甚大歡喜 “They greatly rejoiced” (T 184 [III] 461c26)
甚大愁憂 “He was deeply distressed” (T 224 [VIII] 471a2)

In concluding this section on lexical composition I may stress the fact (somewhat obscured by the stress on binomes in the preceding paragraphs) that the texts freely use monosyllabic forms together with compounds. The relation between the two is far from clear. In some cases the rhythm of the phrase may have prompted the use of longer or shorter forms *metri causa* (although the simultaneous use of both can also be observed in texts such as T 224 and in An Shigao’s translations, which have a very loose style without any trace of prosodic patterns). In other cases a short form may have been preferred since the context made the use of a more explicit compound superfluous. However that may be, the texts contain interesting instances of mixed vocabulary. In the same context we find 相別離 as well as 相別 and 相離 (T 32 [I] 815b14–20); 兒 alternates with 兒子, and 更 with 從更 “retinue” (*ib.*). If a chicken is put into the fire, its tendons either “then contract” 便縮皺 or “then con, then tract” 便縮便皺 (T 13 [I] 235a9,20); instead of the usual 恐懅 King Ajātaśatru is told 勿恐莫懅 (T 626 [XV] 403a18), and in T 322 [XII] 18a8, 12, 16 “to search” is successively rendered by 求索, 索, and 求. Here again, the linguistic situation seems to be characterized by instability and fluidity, and consequently by a large range of possible alternative ways of expression.

[183] B. *The Use of Verbal Complements*

We find a special form of verbal compound in those innumerable cases in which a mono-syllabic verb (or, to be more precise, a monosyllabic word occupying the verbal position and thus forming the nucleus of the predicate) is associated with one of a very limited set of verbal elements, all of which express some spatial relation or movement: (a) 來, 往, 行 before the main verb (expressing purpose on the part of the agent); (b) 在, 詣, 至, 到, 入, 出 affixed to the main verb (expressing location and direction of the action itself in relation to its goal), and (c) 來, 去, 出, 上, 下 following the object, expressing movement in relation to the vantage point of the narrator, and probably also 得, expressing "obtaining the result envisaged by the action".

(a) "Purpose on the part of the agent" expressed by pre-verbs of motion[17]

諸弟子皆當來聽	"The disciples will all come to listen" (T 224 [VIII] 474b29–c1)
七寶自然來生	"The seven jewels came to appear spontaneously" (T 350 [XII] 190c7–8)
乃來雨佛上	"(The petals) then came raining down upon the Buddha" (T 624 [XV] 351b25)
令來還！	"Let him come back!" (T 350 [XII] 193b25–26)
俱出往迎	"Together they went out to welcome him" (T 184 [III] 463c23)
往告太子 . . .	. . . "Go to tell the crown-prince . . . " (T 184 [III] 465c6)
汝行教五百亡去比丘令來還	"Go to tell (those) 500 monks—tell them to come back!" (T 350 [XII] 193b25–26)
行求索鉢！	"Go and search (for that) bowl!" (T 626 [XV] 393a10–11)

17 Ushijima (1971) p. 85 gives numerous examples of verbs preceded by 來, 往, 出, and 趣, but not of 行 vb. expressing "purpose".

(b) Locational and directional complement appended to the main verb[18]

皆閉在牢獄	"They are all locked in jail"	(T 224 [VIII] 471a4)
不復還在世間	"He will no more return in the world"	(T 14 [I] 244a23)
出行詣城門	"They went out to the city gate"	(T 184 [III] 468a5)
往詣王宮	"He went to the palace"	(T 196 [IV] 155c6–7)
去至何所？	"Where are you going?"	(T 350 [XII] 193c22)
共歸至我父母所	"Let us together return to our parents' place"	(T 224 [VIII] 472c22)
汝往至彼間 . . .	"If you go there . . ."	(T 224 [VIII] 473b27)
隨到香山	"They followed him to Perfume Mountain"	(T 624 [XV] 356a20)
遠出到他郡國	"(Like a man who) has gone far out to another region"	(T 418 [XIII] 905c3–4)
於夢中歸到故鄉里	"In his dream he returns to his native village"	(T 418 [XIII] 905c5)
即抱入廟	"Then they carried (the babe) into the temple"	(T 184 [III] 463c29)
行入塚間	"He goes into the graveyard"	(T 607 [XV] 232b17–18)
脫出格戰	"Free yourself from (the wish to) fight"	(T 224 [VIII] 473c29)

[184] (c) Verbal directional complement following the object (if there is any)

1. without object:[19]

汝取持來！	"Fetch it!"	(T 184 [III] 465c25)
或亡, 或人取去	"It is either lost, or taken away by others"	(T 98 [I] 924a9)
亦死過去	"He also will pass away"	(T 196 [IV] 160c9)
反棄捨去	"On the contrary, he throws it away"	(T 418 [XIII] 907a23)

[18] Ushijima (1971) p. 74: examples of locational and directional complements with 在, 至, 到, 及, and 與, but not with 詣, 出 and 入. Dobson (1964) p. 37 only mentions 在 replacing 於 as a "post-verbal particle".

[19] Ushijima (1971) pp. 85–91: numerous examples of this type of directional complement with 來, 去, 上, 下, 出, 入, 內, 還, and 起. More examples, and a discussion of the meaning of the compound in Nishitani Tōshichiro (1956). Yin Yu (1957) mentions a few pre-Han cases, but concludes that directional complements of this type only became common in early Han times.

伏藏一時發出	"(All) hidden treasures simultaneously appeared" (T 184 [III] 463c24)
以天繒貢上	"He offered celestial silken (banners)" (T 624 [XV] 359b9)
孔雀飛下	"The peacock flew down" (T 184 [III] 467b21)
皆從天來下	"They all came down from the heavens" (T 184 [III] 471a7–8)

2. with object:[20]

持刀來	"He brought a knife" (T 184 [III] 468b5)
行求鉢來	"Go get me that bowl!" (T 626 [XV] 393a7)
捨之去	"He threw it away" (T 184 [III] 468a8)
出魔羅網去	"(She will) escape from Māra's net" (T 418 [XIII] 910a22)
來捧鉢去	"(The bird) came to carry the bowl away" (T 184 [III] 470a8)
抱太子出	"They carried the (infant) crown-prince out" (T 184 [III] 464b16)
送我出	"Escort me out (of the palace)" (T 184 [III] 468a1)

(d) There are some cases in which 得 "to get" appears to play a similar role:[21]

隨其所喜經者各自聞得	"Each of them gets to hear a (different) scripture according to his liking" (T 350 [XII] 189c6–7)
持鉤行釣魚得	"With a hook he goes to get fish by angling" (T 350 [XII] 192a24–25)

Needless to say that the verbal complements, and especially those illustrated under (c), closely resemble the directional complements as found in modern Chinese. There are, however, no signs that the complements of

[20] Ushijima (1971) pp. 85–91: examples of directional post-verbs following the object, with 來, 去, 出, 入, 還, 起, and 往. However, most examples of V. O. + 往 and V. O. + 還 are hardly convincing, as they are of the type 持O往, 以O往, 特O還, 以O還. As 將, 持 and 以 generally function as subordinated co-verbs (like 拿, 用, 帶 and 把 in modern Standard Chinese), I would prefer in such cases to interpret 往 or 還 as the main verb ("to return"; "to go away") instead of as an unstressed directional complement ("back", "away").

[21] On p. 75 Ushijima (1971) lists a number of verbal compounds with 得 as second element (收得, 追得, etc.) but his examples of 得 functioning as a verbal complement following an object are limited to negated forms (刺之不得; 索兵不得 etc.). Since we do not find any such negative form among the directional complements, the classification of V. O. [不]得 under this heading is open to doubt.

types (b) and (c) had already combined to form the modern cumulative directional complements of the type . . . 上來, . . . 下去, . . . 出去, etc.

C. *Changes in the Pronominal System: The Demonstratives*

The language of late Han Buddhist texts is marked by a strong reduction of "empty words" and pronouns, both in variety of forms and in functional specializations.[22] Thus the whole series of personal pronouns which we find in standard classical Chinese (in which of course all obsolete and fossilized forms of various ages are accumulated) is virtually reduced to four elements: 我 for the first person (吾 is strikingly rare, and probably already obsolete in the third century CE; 余 and 予 are absent); 汝 for the second person (如 and 而 are not attested; 若 is very rare, and so is 爾 as a personal pronoun—a fact that is very curious in view of the historical relation between 爾 and modern 你;[23] in late Han Buddhist texts *ěr* occurs almost exclusively as a demonstrative pronoun, for which see below); and the "anaphoric" pronouns 其 and 之 for the third person (伊 is absent; one case of 厥 in a literary context). This extreme reduction is somewhat counterbalanced by the appearance of a variety of plural and
[185] generic forms ("we" or "our kind of people" etc.) such as 我等, 我輩, 我曹, 汝等, 汝輩, 汝曹, 我曹等, 汝曹等, and even 我曹等輩 (T 280 [X] 445a20).[24] Even more drastic is the attrition of the interrogative pronouns and adverbs. Most of the old forms (such as 胡, 奚, 焉, 孰, 曷, 盍, 惡,

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[22] In this respect it fully bears out the conclusion reached by Dobson, who regards reduction of the role of "empty words" and the obsolescence of a large part of the classical pronominal system as essential features of the Archaic-Late Han shift. Cf. Dobson, (1964), pp. XXIII, 87–95, 101–102.

[23] Both Dobson (1964), p. 4 and Ushijixna (1971), pp. 139–140, describe the use of *er* as a personal pronoun of common occurrence, used both pregnantly (as subject and object) and as a determinative ("your"). According to Zhan Xiuhui (1973) pp. 53–60, *er* is regularly used in the *Shishuo xinyu* as a personal pronoun, though far less frequently than *ru*. Some of Ushijima's examples have a certain vernacular flavour (e.g. 爾頗有所識乎? "Did you know something about it?") that makes it impossible that the word had become obsolete in early medieval Chinese. Its almost complete absence in Buddhist texts is as puzzling as the extreme rarity of 此 (cf. note 26 below).

[24] The use of such suffixes is very common in early Buddhist texts; they are treated in detail by Ushijima (1971), pp. 51–52: 輩, 曹, 等, 屬, 曹輩, 等輩, 等儕, Zhou Fagao (1959) vol. I. 3, 336–340, and Zhan Xiuhui (1973) pp. 275–283. Their original meaning is no doubt "generic": "belonging to the class or group of . . .", hence, occasionally, 我曹輩 "our kind of people", "people like us". But in most cases, and especially when affixed to personal pronouns, they merely serve to mark the plural. They seem to have become common in the early Han; pre-Han cases are extremely rare (cf. Wang Li, 1936, p. 70).

惡乎) are absent; of the whole range of interrogatives found in Classical Chinese only two: 何 (with its periphrastic compounds such as 云何, 何等, 何以, 何所, 幾何, 何許, 如何, 何如) and 誰 are left over. The rhetorical interrogative 豈 mostly occurs in a much diluted sense; it appears largely to have been supplanted by 寧 as a general-purpose interrogative adverb (used in both rhetorical and informative questions), and there are some new forms emerging (e.g. 那, 詎, 幾所 and interrogative ... *wèi* ... 爲).[25] In order to illustrate both the reduction and the new forms and structures attested in our texts, I have chosen the demonstratives. Here the pattern is very clear. The sector is completely dominated by only three demonstratives: 是 "this", 爾 "such", "that (kind of) ... ", and 彼 "that", "yonder". The forms 此 and 斯 are very rare[26] and were no doubt already obsolete in actual speech; the same holds good for 夫 and 茲. There is only one case of 那 as a demonstrative—as far as I know the earliest attested occurrence of *nà* in that function. An important development is the emerging use of 是 as a copula.

a. *Shi* 是

1. *As a demonstrative.*
In this function *shi* occurs independently as a subject or object (是爲愚癡 "that is ignorance" [T 418 (XIII) 907a24]; 去是幾所? "How far is it from here?" [T 224 (VIII) 471b14]) and as a determinative (是燈炷 "that lamp" [T 350 (XII) 191a25]; 是故 "therefore" and 是時 "at that time", *passim*).

Here we find again, as in the case of the personal pronouns, an abundant use of the plural and generic suffixes ～輩 and ～曹; the curious cumulative suffixes (～等輩, ～曹等 etc.) are, however, not attested.

我亦如是輩	"I am also like those (people)". (T 13 [I] 235c13)
見是輩人 當如見佛無有異	"Seeing those people is like seeing the Buddha, without any difference" (T 626 [XV] 405a15)

[25] The evidence from early Buddhist texts thus largely corroborates the conclusion drawn by Dobson (1964), pp. 80–90, regarding the extreme simplification of the system of interrogative pronouns, and the dominant role of the "all-purpose forms" 何 and 誰. (Dobson adds 安; its absence in Late Han Buddhist Chinese is puzzling. It regularly occurs in *Shishuo xinyu* passages that have a distinctly colloquial ring, cf. Ushijima (1971) p. 382 and Zhan Xiuhui (1973) pp. 198–199).

[26] Here the Buddhist evidence is definitely at variance with the findings of Dobson, Zhan Xiuhui and Ushijima, who stress the very frequent use of 此 in all syntactic positions. I do not know how to explain its rare occurrence in our texts.

是輩人爲已自亡失 “Such people have already ruined themselves” (T 224 [VIII] 441b17)

勿復作是曹事! “Don’t do such (bad) things again!” (T 184 [III] 471a4–5)

是曹人者不當見之 “Such (bad) people—one should not (go to) see them” (T 224 [VIII] 441b18–19)

Occasionally the determinative character of 是曹 is made explicit:

是曹之人誹謗法者 “Such people who slander the doctrine” (T 224 [VIII] 441b20)

2. The *determinative nominal* sentence ending in . . . 也 (of the type A B 也「孔子山東人也」in which the final particle 也 expresses the identity of A in terms of B, A and B both being nominal elements) is remarkably rare in our texts; since its rate of occurrence appears to be proportionate to the frequency of other typical *wenyan* features, it may well be that the nominal sentence was already obsolescent in living speech.[27] On the other hand, the shift in function of 是 from a demonstrative to a (semi-)copula seems to be in full swing, and there are many cases in which it has lost its demonstrative or anaphoric character.[28]

誰是汝師者? “Who is your teacher?” (T 350 [XII] 193c24)

此夢者是王福慶 “This dream means good luck for your Majesty” (T 184 [III] 463b20)

一切人皆是華 “All people are flowers” (T 458 [XIV] 438c10)

諸法是法身 “All dharmas are (identical with) the dharma-body” (T 626 [XV] 401b11)

佛天中天是善知識 “The Lord Buddha is (our) good acquaintance” (T 350 [XII] 190a15)

[27] On the other hand the use of 也 as a final particle in a verbal sentence expressing something like “objective statement” is fairly common; e.g. 不可却也 “It cannot be eliminated” (T 350 [XII] 191a14); 是故名爲神珠寶也 “Therefore it is called a supernatural jewel” (T 184 [III] 462c18–19); 雖有爾所子, 不在子計中也 “Although there are so many sons, he is not counted among them” (T 350 [XII] 191b17–18).

[28] For the use of 是 as a copula see Liu Shiru (1957); Wang Li (1937) esp. pp. 31–38; Dobson (1964) p. 71; Ushijima (1971) pp. 325–327 and p. 418, and Zhan Xiuhui (1973) pp. 545–554. For early Han examples see Hong Cheng (1957). In the determinative phrase A 是 B, 是 may originally have been resumptive, “taking up” the subject A: “As to A, *that* is B”, especially if a final 也 is added (many instances in Ushijima, esp. p. 326). But this seems to be literary usage; the form does not occur in our texts. (We do, however, find some hybrid forms such as 曉是者是爲淨持戒也 T 350. 193. 2.).

[186] It would seem that the development of the copulative sentence with 是 resulted from two simultaneous expansions: on the one hand, 是 increasingly took over the role of the classical nominal sentence with . . . 也, and, on the other hand, it encroached upon the use of 爲 in the sense of "to act as". The latter development is attested by several cases of alternation of 是 and 爲 in an analogous context:

白淨王者是吾累世所生父	"This king Śuddhodana is the father from whom I have been born life after life" (T 184 [III] 463a28–29)
已更五百世曾爲菩薩妻	"She had been the Bodhisattva's wife in the course of 500 lives" (T 184 [III] 462b1)
皆是阿羅漢	"They all were Arhats" (T 184 [III] 461a8–9)
本爲凡人	"He originally was a commoner" (T 184 [III] 461b5)
誰是汝師者?	"Who is your teacher?" (T 350 [XII] 193c24)
是爲我師	"This is my teacher" (T 350 [XII] 193c27)

The same blurring of distinctions between 是 and 爲 appears from those cases in which instead of the classical 以 *A* 爲 *B*, "to regard, or treat, *A* as *B*", we find a construction with 是, such as

持「非我所」是「我所」	"To regard 'not-mine' as 'mine'" (T 350 [XII] 192a25)

The reason why I prefer to call *shi*, as used in the way illustrated above, a "semi-copula", is that the most convincing proof of purely copulative use, i.e. the negation of 是 by means of 不, is not attested in our texts.[29] It is, however, in some instances preceded by other negatives:

非是正道	"It is not the right way" (T 626 [XV] 403a4–5); note that 是 follows the negative instead of preceding it.

[29] There is, however, one occurrence of 不是 mentioned by Ushijima (1971) p. 328: 我亦不癡, 亦不是苻堅 "I am neither foolish, not am I (another) Fu Jian" (*Songshu* 宋書 95. 28a), which proves that at least in this case 是 has developed into a pure copula. (Curiously enough, Ushijima does not draw the conclusion from this important piece of evidence; the quotation is hidden in the section on negatives.)

是水將無是大海?	"This water—wouldn't that be the Ocean?" (T 224 [VIII] 447a21–22)
得無是白淨王子悉達者乎?	"Couldn't that be the son of King Śuddhodana?" (T 196 [IV] 150a19–20)[30]

In general, however, in negative sentences expressing identification of subject and predicate either the classical use of 非 "is not" (rarely 非 . . . 也) is continued or we find verbal sentences with 不爲 (or even the hybrid form 非爲: 此非爲人 "This is not a man", [T 184 (III) 466a08]).

b. *Er* 爾

is very frequent as a demonstrative element; in meaning it wavers between "such a . . ." and "this/that". Its *determinative use* is virtually restricted to a small number of combinations which are extremely common in Buddhist narrative texts:[31]

1. 爾時 "at that time", mostly preceding the subject:

爾時所視悉亦了了	"At that time everything which he looked at became clearly visible" (T 626 [XV] 402c25)
爾時, 久遠過去時	"At that time, in the distant past . . ." (T 626 [XV] 404a27)

In one instance we find:

當爾日 . . .	"On that day . . ." (T 196 [IV] 157b16)

[187] 2. 爾故 "therefore", generally preceding the subject:

爾故字爲菩薩	"Therefore he is named 'Bodhisattva'" (T 224 [VIII] 427b13)

30 For examples of interrogative sentences introduced by 得無 . . ., 無乃 . . . and 將無 . . ., expressing a strong surmise and anticipating a positive answer ("wouldn't it be . . ."), see Yoshikawa (2) esp. pp. 484–493, Ushijima (1971) pp. 367–370, and Zhan Xiuhui (1973) pp. 322–326.

31 Dobson only mentions 爾 as a personal pronoun (cf. note 25); Zhao Ji's *Mencius commentary* which forms the material of his analysis apparently does not contain any instance of demonstrative 爾. For *er* as a demonstrative in *Shishuo xinyu* see Zhan Xiuhui (1973) pp. 157–160. Ushijima treats 爾 (apart from its use as a personal pronoun) under different headings: (pp. 20, 54) as a static verb "to be so", also in the compounds 乃爾 "in such a way" and 爾乃 "this being so, under such circumstances". On p. 173 Ushijima illustrates the use of 爾 as a demonstrative pronoun, used pregnantly (especially in the object position; 何以知爾?) after a preposition (自爾), and determinatively 爾時, 爾日, 爾夜, 爾夕, 爾故). More examples, mostly from early medieval sources, in Wang Li (1937) p. 281; and in Zhou Fagao (1959) vol. I. 3, pp. 151–155.

爾故無所著	"That is why he is free from attachment" (T 224 [VIII] 427b28)	
爾故說是語耳	"That is the only reason why I speak these words" (T418 [XIII] 907c8–9)	

3. 爾所 "So much, so many" (cf. 何所 "what [kind of]?" and 幾所 "how much" both of frequent occurrence in our texts):[32]

羅漢辟支佛智爾所耳	"The wisdom of an Arhat or of a Pratyeka-buddha is just so much (and no more)"	(T 350 [XII] 191b13)
爾所子	"So many sons"	(T 350 [XII] 191b17)
亡我爾所珍寶!	"I lost so many of my jewels!"	(T 418 [XIII] 907a10)

In one instance we find the expanded form with 乃爾 (for which see below):

有乃爾所醫王	"(Although) there are so many master physicians"	(T 350 [XII] 192a5–6)

4. In the *predicate position* 爾 seems to function as a static verb: "(to be) so":

爾, 天中天	"So it is, Lord"	(T 224 [VIII] 427a20)
設爾 . . .	"Suppose it is so . . ."	(T 224 [VIII] 428b10)
雖爾, 會說其意	"Nevertheless, you can explain its meaning"	(T 626 [XV] 392c4–5)
爲實爾不?	"Is it really so?"	(T 196 [IV] 159b26)
不當爾	"It should not be like that"	(T 458 [XIV] 438b17)

This use of 爾 is particularly frequent in the combinations . . . 亦爾 "(is, are) also like that" (referring to a situation described before), and . . . 乃爾 "such is . . .":

32 This remarkable use of ～所 in such compounds is not mentioned either by Dobson or by Ushijima; it is reminiscent of the role of 許 in expressions such as 何許 "where?" and 幾許 "how many", and as a suffix following round numbers (e.g. 二百許 "about 200") indicating global quantity (the latter role is occasionally also played by 所 cf. Ushijima (1971) p. 109: 百所日; 三千所兵). In any case, 何所 and 幾所 are fairly frequent in our texts, e.g. 何所是道 "What is the Way?" (T 626 [XV] 395c6); (T 624 [XV] 360b5–6); 何所法名陀羅尼? "What kind of *dharma* is called dhāraṇī?" (*ib.* T 626 [XV] 397a27); 何所是親屬? "What kind (of people) are his relatives?" (T 624 [XV] 360b5–6); 出幾所滴? "How many drops (of oil) would you produce?" (T 350 [XII] 191b14): 去是幾所? "How far is it from here?" (T 224 [VIII] 471b14). For a discussion of 爾許 (not found in our texts, but clearly equivalent to 爾所) in somewhat later (early 5th cent.) Buddhist usage, see Nishitani Toshichirō (1958), esp. pp. 90–98.

令他人亦爾	"They make other people do likewise"	(T 624 [XIV] 348c4)
餘他輩亦爾	"The other things are also like that"	(T 224 [VIII] 436a6)
諸法亦爾	"Such is also the case with the *dharma*s"	(T 626 [XV] 392a25)
所問乃爾	"Such is what you have asked"	(T 624 [XV] 350a8)

In most cases, however, 乃爾 follows the main verb as an adverbial complement: "in such a way", "to such a degree":

汝莫自困苦乃爾!	"Don't mortify yourself like that!"	(T 224 [VIII] 472c13–14)
是何等臺 . . . 姝好乃爾?	"What kind of tower is that . . . that is so beautiful?"	(T 224 [VIII] 473a19–20)
所供事佛甚多乃爾	"The Buddhas whom he has served are as numerous as that"	(T 624 [XV] 352c28)

The correspondence in function and meaning with classical 然 or 如是 is obvious. This correspondence is confirmed by some passages in which 爾 and its classical equivalent alternate in an analogous context:

令他人亦爾	"They make other people do likewise"	(T 624 [XV] 348c4)
教授人民亦然	"They taught the people to do likewise"	(T 418 [XIII] 903c7–8)

[188]

爾, 天中天	"So it is, Lord"	(T 224 [VIII] 427a20)
如是天中天	"So it is, Lord"	(*ib.*)

5. Finally, 爾 occurs in pre-verbal position with the meaning "at that time, then", mostly in the emphatic (?) combination 爾乃:

爾來三月 . . .	"Three months since then . . ."	(T 196 [IV] 163a25)
爾乃坐耳	"Only then I shall sit down"	(T 224 [VIII] 474b10–11)
爾乃得前	"Then he could advance"	(T 184 [III] 462b6)
爾乃爲之	"Then he will be the (lucky) one"	(T 184 [III] 465b29–30)

c. *Ci* 此

Ci is decidedly rare, and generally occurs in a rather literary context; it was no doubt already obsolescent in the third century. The literary character of *ci* appears from its occurrence in stilted expressions such as 若此 (T 322 [XII] 17a29; normally 如是 or . . . 乃爾) and from the fact that its rate of occurrence is proportionate to the general literary character of a text

(only one instance of *ci* in T 350, against thirty cases in the semi-classical T 184). However, in opposition to 彼 it regularly figures even in "vulgar" texts:

亦入於彼, 亦入於此	"It enters both into this and into that" (T 224 [VIII] 475b9–10)

d. *Bi* 彼

Bi "that" is common:

與彼城對	"(This wall) stood opposite to that wall"	(T 184 [III] 461b28–29)
其德出彼上	"His virtue surpassed theirs"	(T 624 [XV] 366b20)
於彼間止	"He lives there"	(T 224 [VIII] 470c23)
汝往至彼間!	"Go over there!"	(T 224 [VIII] 473b27)

The reduplicated form 彼彼 is used to express "various":[33]

眾生彼彼異念	"The various thoughts of all beings"	(T 184 [III] 472a13)
彼彼人種	"The various classes of men"	(T 32 [I] 814c9)

e. *Si* 斯

Si was certainly obsolete in the third century. It only occurs in a "polished" context, always in the sense of "that (noble)..." and never forms compounds with plural/generic suffixes such as ... 等, ... 曹, ... 輩.

致斯巍巍	"To reach this eminent (state)"	(T 184 [III] 461a28)
發斯弘大之誓	"To utter this great vow"	(T 322 [XII] 15c1)

f. *Nà* 那

The character 那 generally stands for the interrogative *nǎ* (e.g. 道士那來? "Where does the master come from?" [T 196 (IV) 157a4–5]; 當那所聞? "Where shall I (get to) hear it?" [T 458 (XIV) 438c18]) or the indefinite pronoun *nǎ* (e.g. 不那中作樂 "He does not take pleasure in anything" [T 626 (XV) 390b13]);[34] I have found only one case in which it clearly denotes the demonstrative *nà*;

33 Not mentioned in Ushijima.

34 For interrogative *nǎ*, which in Late Han and early medieval times exclusively function as an adverb ("how....?"), see Ushijima (1971), p. 361 and pp. 384–386; Wang Li (1358), p. 284.

諸過去佛悉那中浴 "All former Buddhas have taken a bath therein"
(T 458 [XIV] 440c23–24)[35]

[189] D. *Er* 而, *Yu* 於 *and Zhe* 者

If compared with standard classical Chinese, the language of our texts shows a drastic reduction in the number and the variety of functions of "empty words". Certain particles have largely lost their specific function and are used in a much more general way (e.g. the many instances in which the interrogative 豈 has lost its rhetorical force and has become interchangeable with 寧 as a general question-marker:[36] 意豈樂乎? "Is he amusing himself?" [T 184 (III) 467b12]; cf. 太子寧樂乎? [T 184 (III) 466b1–2]). In other cases certain particles appear to be so "diluted" as to become almost meaningless (而 after negations or after the subject; before the direct object; see below). Finally, we observe many ways in which "empty words" acquire new significant functions and meanings, e.g. 寧 as a question-marker; 莫 as a prohibitive;[37] 所 for interrogative "where?"[38]

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[35] Neither Dobson nor Ushijima refer to the existence of demonstrative *nà* in Late Han and early medieval Chinese, nor does Lu Shuxiang (1955). Wang Li (1958), p. 284, supposes that it developed in the Tang period and only became common in Song times; the same conclusion is reached by Ōta Tatsuo (1958), pp. 125–126. Our isolated example from a Buddhist text therefore antedates the recorded cases of *nà* in secular literature by half a millennium.

[36] For blunted 豈 see Dobson (1964), p. 94 and Ushijima (1971), p. 391.

[37] Here again we are faced with a puzzling phenomenon. Dobson (1964) p. 45 notes the obsolescence of 莫 as an "agential distributive" ("of the agents, none"), in Late Han Chinese (which is confirmed by evidence from Buddhist texts), but does not mention *mo* as a prohibitive. Ushijima (1971) does refer to it (p. 82; pp. 398–399) but expressly states that this use of *mo* is very rare, and Zhan Xiuhui (1973) mentions only five cases in *Shishuo xinyu* (pp. 452–453). On the other hand, we observe that *mo* in. this function is extremely frequent in all Late Han Buddhist texts: it has largely supplanted the classical 勿 which must have been obsolete in the living language: 莫稽留! "Don't loiter" (T 184 [III] 467c24); 莫復啼哭 "Don't cry any more" (T 224 [VIII] 471a17); 莫得休息 "You shouldn't take a rest" (*ib.*); note the hybrid and "broken" form 勿恐, 莫懅! "Fear not, don't be afraid!" (T 626 [XV] 403a19), and its "indirect prohibitive" use in 令我莫死! "Don't let me die!" (T 32 [I] 815b27); 令是願莫斷! "Let this vow not be broken!" (T 32 [I] 815c9). The great frequency of prohibitive 莫 in Buddhist texts and its relative rarity in other sources of the period is another indication that the language of early Buddhist translations stands much nearer to the contemporary vernacular than any secular literature.

[38] Not mentioned by Dobson or Ushijima; Nishitani (1958) describes its use in early 5th century Buddhist prose. This curious type of interrogative sentence appears to have evolved from the subordinate question of the type 問女所在 "He asked where the woman was". Some more examples: 今爲所在? "Where is he now?" (T 184 [III] 466a15), cf. 不知寶稱今爲所在 "I do not know where Baocheng is now" (T 196 [IV] 149a28); 當從所聞? "From whom shall I hear (this teaching)?" (T 458 [XIV] 439c17).

(今欲所至? "Where do you want to go?" [T 211 (IV) 592a16–17]; 歎聲從所出? "Where do those praising voice come from?" [T 624 (XV) 352b12–13]), 亦 as conjunctive "and"[39] (e.g. 兒子亦妻 "Children and wife" [T 32 (I) 815c21]; 世間亦天上 "on earth and in the heavens" [T 607 (XV) 230c13]). These phenomena of reduction, dilution and changes in use will be illustrated by four typical cases.

a. *Er* 而

The "normal" use of *er* as final particle of the subordinate clause preceding the main clause (indicating the circumstances under which the action or state described by the main clause takes place) is found in our texts, but so infrequently that it may well have been obsolescent in third century living speech.[40] Some examples:

不鼓而自鳴	"(The instruments) sounded by themselves without being struck" (T 624 [XV] 359b19)
作禮而去	"Having paid homage they went away" (T 626 [XV] 396c22)
作火而不用薪	"Not to use firewood when making a fire" (T 458 [XIV] 438b22–23)

This obsolescence may account for the very curious ways in which 而 is very often used, apparently as a redundant "patch-word", after negations, after adverbial (pre-verbal) word-groups with 於 . . ., and even after the subject of a verbal clause:[41]

39 Not mentioned by Dobson or Ushijima. Here, however, we may suspect that this very curious and aberrant use of 亦 is not an element borrowed from the vernacular but an individual translator's idiosyncrasy. It appears to be confined to An Shigao's very primitive translations, and may be due to his faulty knowledge of Chinese rather than to vernacular influence.

40 For the reduction of the role of 而 and its occasional parasitic use (but not in the ways described here) see Dobson (1964) pp. 56 and 59.

41 These types of extremely attenuated use of *er* are not mentioned by Dobson or Ushijima, and seem to be found only in early Buddhist texts. Unlike 亦 "and" (cf. above, note 39), which could be a clumsy attempt to render *ca* or *athavā*, they have no conceivable counterpart in Sanskrit, and since they occur in Chinese versions made by different people, they cannot be regarded as individual translator's idiosyncrasies. We must conclude that here again we find a fairly common feature of third century vernacular for which our texts provide the only available evidence.

(*after negations*):

其音莫不而聞	"There was none who did not hear its sounds" (T 624 [XV] 354c8–9)
眾魔甚多, 莫不而伏	"The Māra (-demons) were very numerous, but none of them was not vanquished" (T 624 [XV] 361b1–2)
悉不而及逮	"Of all (those people) none has reached it" (T 626 [XV] 403c25)

(*after* 於 . . .):

常於功德而堅固	"As regards good works he always stands firm" (T 624 [XV] 350b13)
如王於衆而爲上	"Just as the king stands out from among the crowd" (T 624 [XV] 354a14)

(*after the subject*):

光而七尺	"(His) halo measures seven feet" (T 624 [XV] 361a18)
衆祐而爲說經	"The Lord preached to them" (T 322 [XII] 15b8–9)
其心而淨潔故	"Because his mind is pure" (T 624 [XV] 360a2)
衆魔而不敢當	"The many Māra (-demons) did not dare to withstand him" (T 624 [XV] 349c1)

[190] If we try to inventorize the ways in which our texts express those types of subordination which in standard *wenyan* would normally be rendered by "subordinated clause + 而", it appears that the latter syntactic pattern has largely been supplanted by periphrastic constructions of the type "when . . . , then . . ."; "although . . . , yet . . ."; ". . . , because . . .", etc. The texts contain a great variety of such periphrastic patterns, making abundant use of words like 便, 即, 乃, 即便 for "then", 亦 and 還 for "yet", 用 . . . 故 and enclitic . . . 故 for "because", etc.

b. *Yu* 於

Yu is very common; it generally conforms to classical usage, both in adverbial position before the main verb, e.g.

於空中作音樂	"In space they made music" (T 224 [VIII] 477b7)

and in post-verbal position, expressing location, direction, etc.:

人有過於大王所	"(if) a man has (committed) a transgression at the Great King's (dwelling-) place . . ." (T 224 [VIII] 471a2–3)

But in many cases of post-verbal use it appears to have been diluted into a general "objective particle" introducing the *direct* object of the main verb:[42]

雨於天華	"(The gods) rained celestial flowers"	(T 624 [XV] 351a29)
降伏於魔	"He vanquishes Māra"	(T 224 [VIII] 476c5)
讒溺於人	"To calumniate others"	(T 350 [XII] 189c5–6)
承事於諸佛	"They served the Buddhas"	(T 418 [XIII] 903c1)
氣力不如於大	"(The lion-cub's) strength is not like that of the big (lion)"	(T 626 [XV] 399b26–27)
見於燈火	"He sees the light of a lamp"	(T 624 [XV] 355c25)
受於衆流	"(like the Ocean which) receives all streams"	(T 626 [XV] 390a28)

It may be noted that in standard *wenyan* phrases like 降伏於魔 and 讒溺於人 would have to be interpreted as passive forms ("To be vanquished by Māra"; "to be calumniated by others"). Here, however, the blunted use of 於 does not create any ambiguity, since there are no cases in our texts of the classical passive with 於, which apparently had become obsolete.

c. *Zhe* 者

The use of *zhe* in our texts generally agrees with classical usage. However, it appears to have acquired two new functions which are both extremely common in Buddhist narrative texts—so common, in fact, that they must have been part of the contemporary living language.

1. As a final particle in conjunction with subj. 誰 "who" and with verb(?) 莫 "There is none who . . . "[43] (but never in conjunction with 莫 "don't");

誰不樂世者?	"Who would not enjoy (this) world?"	(T 184 [III] 468c3)
誰欲買我者?	"Who will buy me?"	(T 224 [VIII] 472b7)
誰是汝師者?	"Who is your teacher?"	(T 350 [XII] 193c24)

[42] Not mentioned by Dobson or Ushijima. Very common in the works of various translators; no conceivable Sanskrit counterpart, and therefore very probably a feature of third century vernacular.

[43] The use of 者 in conjunction with 誰 is not noted by Dobson or Ushijima; Ushijima (1971), p. 82, gives only one example of 莫 . . . 者 (莫敢近者). It is, however, treated by Zhou Fagao (1959), vol. I. 3, pp. 424–425 (examples drawn from Han sources only).

	誰爲卿曹說經者?	“Who has explained the scriptures to you?” (T 350 [XII] 193c25–26)
	莫能當者	“Nobody was a match for him” (T 184 [III] 465c14)
[191]	莫不持華香 . . . 供養者	“There was nobody who did not pay homage to him with flowers and incense” (T 224 [VIII] 476b19–20)
	十方莫不聞名者	“In the ten directions (of space) there was nobody who had not heard their fame” (T 624 [XV] 348c20–21)

2. As the final element of a conditional subordinate clause preceding the main clause; either in conjunction with a conditional particle (如, 若, 使 etc., “if . . .”), or even without such a particle:[44]

若不許者 . . .	“If you do not permit it . . .” (T 184 [III] 465b25)
若男子女人欲求一切智者 . . .	“If a man or woman wants to strive for omniscience . . .” (T 626 [XV] 391b15)
卿設能與我者 . . .	“If you can give it to me . . .” (T 224 [VIII] 472b25)
作是行不缺者 . . .	“If you can act like this without failing . . .” (T 224 [VIII] 471b6–7)
我聞者 . . .	“If I (get to) hear it . . .” (T 224 [VIII] 472c9)
有是曹人者	“If there are such people . . .” (T 224 [VIII] 474c12)
欲得道者 . . .	“If you wish to realize the Way . . .” (T 184 [III] 470c4)
與我者	“If (the cow) is given to me . . .” (T 418 [XIII] 907b8)
唯佛肯者	“Only if the Buddha is willing”. (T 458 [XIV] 435b6)

E. *The Use of Enclitic* -Gu 故

One of the most characteristic features of the language of Buddhist texts is the very peculiar use of causal 故. In standard classical Chinese 故 normally introduces the apodosis: “(because) . . ., *therefore* 故 . . .”. In our texts

[44] Not mentioned by Dobson; Ushijima (1971), p. 260, gives some examples without comments.

this pattern is almost completely superseded by the use of ～故 as a *final* particle. We find two types of sequence: (1) type “It rains 故, I stay home”, and (2) type “I stay home, it rains 故”. Both types are extremely common and must certainly have been current in contemporary speech.[45] In type (1) ～故 is often used in conjunction with a co-verb, thus forming embracing patterns such as 用 . . . 故, 爲 . . . 故, 以 . . . 故 and 從 . . . 故

(1) 故 marking the end of subordinate clause preceding the main clause:

爲一切故當廣說之	“On behalf of all (beings) I shall explain it at large” (T 184 [III] 461b4–5)
不必從年大故, 亦不從多知識故, 亦不從多得福故 . . .	“Not necessarily because I am aged, nor because I have much knowledge, nor because I have gained much happiness . . .” (T 48 [I] 838a26–27)
用歡欣踴躍故 . . .	“Because he was dancing with joy . . .” (T 224 [VIII] 472a19)
用我欲供養於佛故 . . . 用是故, 出血出肉髓欲賣	“Because I wished to pay homage to the Buddha, because of that, I drew my blood and took out my flesh and marrow in order to sell them” (T 224 [VIII] 472c4–5)
以是故說是	“For that reason, he therefore said this” (T 626 [XV] 400b19)

(2) ～故 marking the end of an explicatory clause following the main
[192] clause:

是爲善知識, 多聞經故	“That is my good acquaintance, because he has heard many scriptures” (T 350 [XII] 190a14)
菩薩學用十方人故	“The Bodhisattva trains himself for the sake of the people of all directions (of space)” (T 350 [XII] 191c19)
我自賣身欲供養於師故	“That I sell myself is because I want to pay homage to my master” (T 224 [VIII] 472b21–22)
何以者何? 念於一切故	“Why is this? Because he cares for everybody” (T 626 [XV] 389b23)

[45] In spite of its universal occurrence in Buddhist texts, it is not mentioned by Dobson or Ushijima. In some particular cases, especially in scholastic texts, . . . 故 may have served to render the Sanskrit causal ablative, but it occurs in all types of narrative with such frequency that it must have been a common vernacular feature.

Particularly common is the expression 何以故 "why (is this)?", mostly answered by a clause equally ending in . . . 故:

何以故? 諸經一味故	"Why is this? Because all scriptural teachings are of the same taste" (T 350 [XII] 192b9–10)
所以者何? 用從佛聞深法故	"Why is this? Because he has heard the profound *dharma* from the Buddha" (T 626 [XV] 404b29)

It is very probable that enclitic . . . 故 has developed from classical . . . 故也, but the frequency of enclitic . . . 故 in Buddhist narrative is far greater than that of its classical counterpart in any literary text.

The enclitic use of 故 has remained characteristic of "Buddhist language" through the ages; even the latest Chinese translations of the Song period are teeming with it. However, we must assume that enclitic . . . 故 (like other specifically "Buddhist" expressions such as 云何?, 所以者何? and 我等, 汝曹, though *originally* borrowed from the living language of Late Han and early medieval times, were consciously maintained by later Buddhist writers and translators even long after such forms had disappeared from the vernacular. They came to be distinctive elements in a Buddhist religious idiom that at least in Tang times had become as fossilized as standard *wenyan* itself.

F. *Wéi* 爲 *and Zuo* 作

1. There is an obvious reduction in the use of *wéi* 爲, which in our texts is almost always occurring in the sense of "to function as", "to be"; in other words, in the single clause A *wéi* B, A and B will refer to the same entity. Apart from its meaning "(conscious) activity" in the technical expressions 有爲 and 無爲, it never occurs in the sense of "to make, to practise (as it regularly does in *wenyan*: cf. 爲學 "to study", 爲禮 "to perform the Rites", 爲詩 "to compose poetry", etc.). The use of *wéi* as a semi-copula has already been referred to in connection with *shi* 是 (above, under C. a. 2). Some more examples:

誰爲勝者？	"Who is the winner?"	(T 184 [III] 465c15)
我曹本爲菩薩時 . . .	"When we originally were Bodhisattvas"	(T 224 [VIII] 472a21)
何等爲愈病？	"What is 'recovery'?"	(T 350 [XII] 191c21)
是爲四	"Those are the four (points)"	(T 458 [XIV] 435b24)

2. A phrase . . . *wéi y* very often occurs as a verbal complement following verbs (either or not preceding an object *x*) which either imply some kind of change ("alter *x* into *y*"; "combine *x′* and *x″* into *y*"; "appoint *x* as *y*", etc.), or some kind of mental or verbal identification of *x* as *y* ("call *xy*"; "consider *x* to be *y*").

a. with implied object *x*;

不可合爲一	"They cannot be combined into one" (T 224 [VIII] 475b2)
天下盡成爲水	"The whole world was changed into water" (T 184 [III] 469c13–14)
[193] 家屬人客計爲怨	"His family and other dependents he considers his enemies" (T 322 [XII] 16c4)
彼字爲甲玉女	"She is called the foremost jade-girl" (T 603 [XV] 179a5–6)
呼爲「有」	"To call it 'existing'" (T 350 [XII] 191a7)

b. with object *x* expressed:

字菩薩爲 S	"They called the Bodhisattva S." (T 224 [VIII] 471a8)
名之爲 K	"They called it (= the horse) K." (T 607. 233. 3)

c. The phrase Vb *x* 爲 *y* in *wenyan* most often occurs as 以 *x* 爲 *y*, "to regard *x* as *y*" or "to make *y* from *x*". This occurs a number of times in our texts, both with and without explicitizing the object *x*:

不以爲歡	"He did not regard it as enjoyable" (T 184 [III] 466a22)
以琉璃爲飾	"They made ornaments out of beryl" (T 626 [XV] 399b9)

However, beside this regular *wenyan*-type use of *yi . . . wei* we find a whole array of curious alternative forms in which the first verb (with or without object *x*) consists of 持, and 爲 alternates with 作, 是 and [以]當.[46]

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[46] In general it may be said that in the early scriptural idiom 持 has to a large extent replaced 以 as a subordinated pre-verb meaning "handling, using" = "by means of", as in 持是華供養 "with these flowers pay homage to her" (T 224 [VIII] 474c23), or as an indicator of the proleptic object, comparable to modern *bǎ* 把, as in 持法施與人 "give the Doctrine to the people" (T 350 [XII] 190a23–24), or even in a causal sense ("because of, on account of"), as in 持智慧不入悪道 "Because of their wisdom they do not enter the evil paths (of existence)" (T 350 [XII] 190c12).

持五百女人爲汝給使	"Use the 500 women as your servants" (T 224 [VIII] 476a12)
持「無常」作「有常」	"To regard the impermanent as permanent" (T 350 [XII] 192a24)
持「非我所」是「我所」	"To regard not-mine as mine" (T 350 [XII] 192a25)
我曹持師以當佛無有異	"We regard (you, our) teacher as the Buddha, without any difference" (T 224 [VIII] 476a1)

3. In a number of occurrences the predicate consists of *wéi* followed by an element that is verbal rather than nominal; in some such cases *wéi* seems to be superfluous:

佛爲從何所來?	"Where does the Buddha come from?" (T 224 [VIII] 473c6–7)
佛爲於樹下六年得道耶?	"Has the Buddha after six years under the tree realized the Way?" (T 184 [III] 461a27)
生死爲久長	"Life-and-death are long-lasting" (T 184 [III] 468a9)
是乃爲難	"This, then, is difficult" (T 458 [XIV] 438c16–17)
是身爲譬如沙城	"This body is comparable to a wall of sand" (T 607 [XV] 236a18)

4. There is abundant evidence that in the vernacular *wéi* had largely been supplanted by *zuo* 作. *Zuo* never occurs in its *wenyan* meaning of "to arise, to stand up"; it is extremely frequent both as a transitive verb "to make, to do" (in which function it appears to have taken the place of *wéi*) and as a semi-copula "to be, to function as".

a. Zuo as a transitive verb "to make, to do":

還作大火欲祠之	"And then (the brahmin) made a big fire with the intention to sacrifice" (T 458 [XIV] 438b15)
但欲作惡	"They only want to commit evil" (T 350 [XII] 192c20)
有人作佛形像 . . .	"If somebody makes a Buddha-image . . . " (T 224 [VIII] 476b17)
所作是爲行	"What one does, that is the act" (T 607 [XV] 231c18–19)

[194] *b. Zuo* as a semi-copula "to function as, to be":

願爲師作婢	"We want to be your slaves, Master" (T 224 [VIII] 475c27)
汝當作王	"You should be a king" (T 184 [III] 471a19)
不能作佛	"He cannot be a Buddha" (T 350 [XII] 191c18)
悉使作琉璃	"He caused the whole (earth) to be (like) beryl" (T 224 [VIII] 474c15)

5. As in the case of *wéi* (see above, under F. 2.), *zuo* often serves as the first element in a verbal complement which is preceded by a verb referring to change of status (I have, however, found no cases in which such a complement follows a very meaning "to call" or "to name", comparable to modern A 叫作 B):

能分一身作百作千	"He was able to divide his one body into a hundred or a thousand" (T 184 [III] 471b27)
化地作泥	"He changed the earth into mud" (T 184 [III] 462b5–6)
其華悉化作佛	"Those flowers were all transformed into Buddhas" (T 458 [XIV] 441a2)
若復現作菩薩 . . .	"If they again manifest themselves as Bodhisattvas . . ." (T 624 [XV] 359b2–3)

6. Again, just as we observed in the case of *wéi* (cf. F. 3. above), *zuo* is often followed by an object of a verbal nature:

恐作稽留	"(The gods) feared that he would loiter" (T 184 [III] 467c1415)
適作念 . . .	"Just when I had this thought . . ." (T458 [XIV] 440b19)
作是啼哭	"When he was weeping like that . . ." (T 224 [VIII] 471b16)

The six samples presented in the foregoing pages have been chosen more or less at random. As a description of the Late Han scriptural idiom this article is therefore very incomplete; several topics of interest had to be left out or could only be mentioned in passing, and the important subject of the syntactic structure at the level of the sentence, both simple and composite, has not been touched upon. Moreover, I am painfully aware of the fact that its methodological basis is very weak, since in the presentation of this idiom most emphasis has been given to those points in which

it deviates from standard *wenyan*—a method which can claim no more merit than any attempt to describe Italian by explaining how it differs from Latin. Of course the system should be described as an autonomous structure in its own terms. In this article the comparison with *wenyan* (and, occasionally, with modern standard Chinese) has been deliberately chosen to bring into focus the very distinctive character of the idiom, not as a viable model of description.

We started with a fourfold working hypothesis: (1) the language of the earliest Buddhist translations forms a systematic whole; (2) it consistently deviates from standard *wenyan*; (3) those deviations are largely due to vernacular influence; (4) this influence is so strong and so clearly expressed that through the analysis of the scriptural idiom we can get a fairly reliable picture of metropolitan spoken language of the second century CE. The no doubt confusing mass of grammatical features and text examples presented here was primarily intended to substantiate this hypothesis. The evidence has been as convincing as I take it to be. Much more research should be undertaken in this unique marginal literature.

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Appendix B
List of Later Han Buddhist Texts (= *Taishō daizōkyō*)

T 13 [*Chang a-han*] *shi baofa jing* [長阿含]十報法經, 1 j.; An Shigao 安世高
T 14 *Ren benyu sheng jing* 人本欲生經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 31 *Yiqie liu she shou yin jing* 一切流攝守因經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 32 *Si di jing* 四諦經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 36 *Ben xiang yi zhi jing* 本相猗(v. 倚)致經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 48 *Shifa feifa jing* 是法非法經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 57 *Lou fenbu jing* 漏分部經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 98 *Pu fayi jing* 普法義經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 112 *Ba zhengdao jing* 八正道經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 150 *Qi chu san guan jing* 七處三觀經, 2 j.; *id.*
T 184 *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經, 2j.; Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 and Zhu Dali 竺大力.
T 196 *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經, 2 j.; Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 and Zhu Tanguo 竺曇果.
T 224 *Daoxing banruo jing* 道行般若經, 10 j.; by Lokakṣema 支婁迦讖.
T 280 *Dousha jing* 兜沙經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 313 *Achu foguo jing* 阿閦佛國經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 322 *Fajing jing* 法鏡經, 1 j.; An Xuan 安玄 and Yan Fotiao 嚴佛調
T 350 *Yiri moni bao jing* 遺日摩尼寶經, j.; attr. Lokakṣema.
T 418 *Banjou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經, 3 j.; Lokakṣema.
T 458 *Wenshushili wen pusa shu jing* 文殊師利菩薩署經, 1 j.; Lokakṣema.
T 602 *Da anban shouyi jing* 大安般守意經, 2 j.; An Shigao. 安世高
T 603 *Yin chi ru jing* 陰持入經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 605 *Chanxing faxiang jing* 禪行法想經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 607 *Daodi jing* 道地經, 1 j.; *id.*
T 624 *Dun zhentuoluo suo-wen Rulai sanmei jing* 伅眞陀羅所問如來三昧經, 3 j.; attr. Lokakṣema.
T 626 *Asheshi wang jing* 阿闍世王經, 2 j.; Lokakṣema.
T 630 *Chengju guangming dingyi jing* 成具光明定意經, 1 j.; Zhi Yao 支曜
T 792 *Fa shou chen jing* 法受塵經, 1 j.; An Shigao.
T 807 *Neizang bai bao jing* 內藏百寶經, j.; Lokakṣema.
T 1508 *Ahan koujie shier yinyuan jing* 阿含口解十二因緣經, 1 j.; An Xuan and Yan Fotiao.

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LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

The earliest preaching of Buddhism in Han-dynasty China (206 BCE–220 CE) took place in the first two centuries of the Common Era and was thus more or less contemporaneous with that of Christianity on the other side of the Eurasian continent. The correspondence goes beyond this accidental synchronism. Both were universal religions directed at individual salvation, and both were characterized by a strong missionary zeal. Both Christianity, in the first centuries of its existence, as well as Buddhism, by then five centuries old, was disseminated through an empire that had reached its greatest extent, and within which favorable circumstances were created for contact between the center and remote parts of the empire: here the Pax Romana, and in China (until its sudden disintegration at the end of the second century) the well-functioning Han dynasty, which in this period exercised sovereignty over a great portion of Central Asia and thus controlled the trade routes through the barren heart of the continent, along with its oasis vassal states. At the westernmost end of this caravan route, the expansionist determination of a Central Asian people, the Indo-Scythian Yuezhi, during this same period resulted in the formation of a great kingdom that stretched from present-day Bukhara and Samarkhand to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kashmir. The ruling dynasty of the Kushanas patronized Buddhism, which had spread in the last centuries before the Common Era from the eastern Gangetic Plain over the whole of the Indian subcontinent. Here, in the border zone between the Indian world and that of the Hellenized East, arose a hybrid culture that provides evidence of Hellenistic influence, above all in the domain of Buddhist art. Thus the penetration of Buddhism in Central Asia and China originated from a number of centers in northwest India and the Pakistan-Iran border
[9] region; it is no wonder that the oldest preachers of Buddhism in China came from several centers, and that the earliest-documented Buddhist community settled in the capital Luoyang on the continuation of the transcontinental trade route.

Just as Christianity in its oldest phase spread through Jewish communities throughout the Roman Empire, Buddhism too found its first following most likely among foreigners on Chinese soil: traders of diverse origins,

interpreters, hostages, exiles, and foreign mercenaries, and from this thoroughly marginal position, it drew its equally marginal—in as far as they did not belong to the literate upper class—Chinese faithful. It is thus no wonder that we do not know when Buddhism was introduced to China—picturesque stories about its triumphant entry at royal invitation around the year 60 were long ago unmasked as religious propaganda. The earliest, notably casual, reference to Buddhist monks and laypersons in Chinese historical literature dates from 65 CE, but that is also really our only glance at an embryonic phase concerning which we know nothing more.

More is known about the above-mentioned Buddhist community of Luoyang. In the period between 149 CE, when the Parthian monk An Shigao arrived there and published the first translations of Buddhist texts, and 210 CE, when the "Church of Luoyang" was destroyed in the chaos and devastation that accompanied the last convulsions of the Han dynasty, some ten foreign masters were active there, surrounded by a circle of Chinese faithful of which the number is unknown. We know little of the circumstances in which they worked. There were evidently two "temples" or "cloisters" in or near the city, where people gathered, but nothing is known of the internal organization of the monastic community (*saṅgha*). The main rules of conduct for monks were probably passed on by foreign masters, and in all likelihood that would have sufficed in this initial phase. The information we have is basically limited to a single aspect: the translation of Buddhist works in Chinese, obviously for the benefit of a growing
[10] Chinese flock of the faithful.

The oldest translations were typical products of a first generation that was forced to experiment. The master had a manuscript or recited by heart. If he himself knew enough Chinese (which was seldom the case), he gave a rough oral translation, but usually this was given by a bilingual intermediary. Chinese assistants wrote this down and submitted the sometimes scarcely understandable text to "revision," in addition to which all sorts of verbal explanations given by the master were worked into the text. The translation work took place with the financial support of pious lay people who hoped to contribute not only to the preaching of doctrine through this "good work," but also to their own well-being in future lives.

It is no surprise that the products of these oldest "translation teams," of which about 30 texts remain preserved, are far from exact; they are awkward, worded in a peculiar half-literary Chinese teeming with vulgarisms, and at times, in spite of all efforts of the old Chinese redactors to clarify the text, largely unintelligible. This applies, in particular, to those texts which according to their very specialized content were intended for

"practitioner" monks. As we shall see, in Buddhism a clear distinction is consistently made between the holy path as practiced to the full extent by those who "left the household state" in order to lead a life of strict spiritual discipline and bodily abstinence as monks, and the pious laity, who sustain the saṅgha with their donations, and who are merely subject to a few moral rules and periodic fasting regulations. Among the extant Han translations are found several texts that are obviously directed to the lay community, and that in terms of style and content differ strikingly from the dry, excessively technical tracts. They are written in a more narrative and entertaining style, although they also contain here and there the monotonous enumerations of scholastic systematics: the eight this, the thirty-six that. The language is a peculiar mixture of spoken language and forms and clichés borrowed from the Chinese literary tradition. Some of
[11] these more popular texts are dedicated to devotionalism and to the ideal conduct of the laity on different social levels. Two of them deal with a theme that, as prominent as it is in the Indian tradition, must have especially appealed to the Chinese laity because of their traditional interest in history and biography—the life of the Buddha—and it is these two texts (properly speaking, one continuous text in two separately translated sections) that have been translated for this book.

Before examining the subject matter dealt with in these texts, we must gain a good understanding of the historical environment from which they arose—that is, Chinese Buddhism in its oldest phase—and we must examine what the essential message of Buddhism meant for this milieu. Here too the similarity with the earlier history of Christianity is enlightening. The dissemination of both religions was facilitated because on the one hand the new message corresponded with other contemporary popular (whether or not "exotic") teachings of salvation, and on the other hand it seemed to provide a meaningful answer to certain questions that were not posed, let alone answered, by the existing religions, dedicated to glorification of the state and to collective ritual. In the modest environment of semiliterate urbanites within which Buddhism won its first adherents, far below the level of the Confucian elite of scholar-officials and higher purveyors of culture, there was at that time certainly a growing interest in a teaching of salvation based on a personally oriented religious life. Daoist wonder workers preached a teaching of meditation and good works that, combined with *yoga*-like exercises, alchemical prescriptions, and sexual practices, at least among the most intrepid adepts, could have led to the state of the Holy or Realized—a condition of total self-identification with the Way (Dao) that underlies all natural processes. Such a liberated one

is characterized by immorality in an indestructible ethereal body, the capacity to "transform" himself without limitation, and a full command of all powers of nature. In addition to these living masters who had magic potions and sacred books (partly based on much older works: in particular
[12] the old philosophical work attributed to Laozi, the *Daodejing*, the "Book of the Way and its Virtue," was subjected to the most fantastic interpretations), there were the cult of local saints, legendary or not, and the worship of innumerable local spirits and gods—a distant precursor of the Chinese folk religion that flourished at a fundamental level in all ages.

Therefore the first stimulus was evidently present: there were analogous movements, and there were clear indications in the second century that the still largely unknown and half-understood Buddhism of the first Chinese converts was profoundly interwoven with certain popular ideas and ideals of that time, originating from the Daoist sacred teachings and other variants of folk belief. But there must also have been a second stimulus at work: there were questions and uncertainties that were resolved by neither the Confucian social ethic nor the Daoist worldview, whereas Buddhism provided concrete and ready-made answers at precisely that elementary level. This applied primarily to ideas regarding death and the hereafter. The Confucianism with which "ordinary people" came into contact was remote from court rituals and the philosophical and cosmological speculations of the highest elite; it probably included little more than participation in certain ceremonial rites that were encouraged by the government (such as the cult of the ancestral soil), and above all the performance of precisely defined social obligations within the framework of the family system sanctioned by Confucianism. In a system so preeminently focused on one's present life and collectivity, the death of the individual and the possible continued existence of his soul played a subordinate role. Even more important than the fate of the deceased is his bodily continuity through his descendants, and the retribution of one's good and bad actions through a supermundane power—if we can even speak of one—that takes place in this life or affects one's descendants. The soul (or souls) is imagined as semi-material and transitory, the ideas about their continued existence after death being extremely vague and contradictory. As a matter of fact, religious Daoism had not much more to offer, because the
[13] attainment of bodily immortality was by definition restricted to the very few, and the rewards that are set aside for the average practitioner of the way to redemption are expressly of this world: health, harmony, children, and well-being for oneself and one's descendants. Here too, the mystery

of death remains unsolved, and propositions concerning the hereafter appear vague and confused.

It is clear that Buddhism, even in the extremely incomplete and distorted form in which it came to be known in its embryonic phase in China, led to an important shift in thinking. This was accomplished through the proclamation of two closely related articles of faith: the doctrine of *reincarnation*, according to which our present-day life forms one single link in a series of innumerable existences, and the conviction that the fate of the individual and the circumstances of his rebirth (varying from the deepest hell to the highest heavens) are determined by his mental, verbal, and bodily *actions* (*karman*) in earlier lives, retaining, however, the possibility of accumulating "merit" in this life through religious devotion and good works, and thereby to lay the foundation for a future favorable rebirth. In this manner, Buddhism simultaneously introduced a new, very individual ethic (which for instance emphatically rejected every form of recompense visited upon descendants and any collective debt, and laid the whole emphasis on the mental intention of every action), and a clearly enunciated outlook on life, death, and the hereafter. That Buddhism in fact (at least in its writings meant for Buddhist monks) held a much subtler and more complicated view, in which there is no place for a soul as a permanent, spiritual presence in persons, appears to have been unknown in these early stages, or to have found no resonance: the oldest generations of believers in China considered "the continued existence of the soul after death" to be an essential of the Buddhist teaching, in combination with a belief in reincarnation and the retribution of all thoughts, words, and deeds.

The question was, further, whether the perspective of endless rebirths in the "five paths of existence", subordinate to an iron law of karmic retri-
[14] bution, encouraged the faithful, all the more so because true Liberation—*nirvāṇa*, the total disengagement that ends this process—was only attainable after a (or as a rule more than a single) life of total religious effort, and certainly was not granted to faithful laypersons. The answer to the question appears to be ambivalent. Some were indeed grasped by Buddhism's essential message of salvation, and took the decision to strive for liberation as monks. For the laity, as we have seen, in Buddhist preaching of the faith more emphasis is placed on "good works" and on undertaking some simple precepts than on the preaching of the, for them unattainable, ideal of total liberation. The promised reward lay in the attainment of a favorable rebirth, that is, a fortunate life as a prominent and prosperous person, or even the blissful and innumerable centuries-long life of a god

in one of the many heavens. Presumably, for the oldest Buddhist community in China, which certainly consisted for the most part of laity, this clear prospect of a glorious hereafter weighed more heavily than the ideal of total Extinction, and from that perspective the image of reincarnation seemed to be more hopeful than frightening.

That image of a better life after death contrasted dramatically with the misery of the present existence. In the second century this was by no means trivial, certainly when we extricate ourselves from the small privileged elite through whose eyes we generally observe Chinese culture. The life of the ordinary person, confined in a walled-in district, subject to a severe and suspicious regime, and periodically ravaged by famine and natural disasters, had always been full of uncertainty and hardships. The collapse of the official administrative structure in the last decades of the second century, the continuous wars of roaming 'warlords', and the destruction of the capital in 190 CE created a situation of growing desperation, in which the prospect of a future life of well-being or even holiness, to be obtained by simple devotion and good works, was all the more allur-
[15] ing. In addition, Buddhism played another psychologically important role under these circumstances, because—with its persistent emphasis on the vanity and futility of every worldly ambition and on the transitory nature of everything to which men are attached—it confirmed the prevalent pessimism and offered it religious sanction. The same held for one of the most basic principles of the Buddhist teaching, repeated as a litany in many texts: every existence is bound with suffering through its transitory nature—stronger still: suffering is the essence of every form of existence.

Finally, Buddhism preached a personal faith in certain powerful, superhuman salvific figures. In the Buddhism of the so-called Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna, of which more below)—a teaching of salvation, some of whose writings had already been translated in the oldest period—these were above all the bodhisattvas, future buddhas, filled with unlimited power and compassion, and also some extraterrestrial buddhas, in particular the buddha of the "Western Paradise" (Sukhāvatī). In our text, which displays only faint traces of this new persuasion, the role of the superhuman savior is filled by the Buddha himself. But it is striking that the actual role of the savior is still overshadowed here by that of the wonder worker, who transforms objects, reads minds, parts the waters, and in the blink of an eye transfers himself to distant continents. All these themes are "authentic" (that is, derived from the Indian tradition), but the prominent position they take in the narrative, and the detailed manner in which they (with unmistakable pleasure) are presented, make it more than likely that this

aspect too struck a chord in the Chinese lay community of the early days. For them the Buddha (just as his contemporary reflection, the monk) was not only a savior, but also a great magician—an image with which they were very familiar from religious Daoism.

The version of the Buddha narrative translated here was translated into Chinese in two separate parts around the year 200 at Luoyang. These two texts are included in the modern edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon (*Taishō issaikyō*, Tokyo, 1924–1929) as numbers 184 and 196; the Dutch
[16] translation is based on this edition. The first part begins with the famous episode in which, 91 cosmic periods in the past, the buddha of that time, Dīpaṁkara, revealed to a young brahmin student that he would *someday* become the Buddha Śākyamuni, and it ends shortly after the Awakening. The Chinese title *Xiuxing benqi jing* literally means "The Sūtra (holy text) about the Origin of the Religious Life," in which *benqi*, "origin," refers both to the description of the acts and karmic factors that in the course of innumerable existences ultimately lead to the attainment of Buddhahood in the final life, as here described, as well as to a more specific meaning of 'origin', since the Awakening that the ascetic Gautama attained in his final life marks the historical starting point of the Buddhist teaching. The Indian source is lost, and it is unknown to what extent the Chinese title constitutes an accurate reflection of the original. The second part (that fits so closely to the first that the opening paragraphs constitute a near literal repetition of the ending of the first text) is a composite work. The first portion (sections I–VI) is a continuous narrative, devoted to the first preaching of the Buddha in the Deer Park of Benares, the first converts (the five from Benares, Yaśas and his entourage, the three Kāśyapa brothers and their disciples), the conversation with King Bimbisāra, the arrival of the two great disciples Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, and the return of the Buddha to his birthplace Kapilavastu, where he converted his father Śuddhodana and a great number of other members of his clan. Until that point the narrative forms a continuous unity, and the sequence of the episodes is identical to that we find in other versions of the Buddha narrative. The remainder (sections VII–XV) consists of a hodgepodge of episodes that do not cohere with one another, and of which some (such as section IX, the story of Gautamī's accession to the order) are usually placed in the very last years of the Buddha's life. As such, this seems inconsistent with the Chinese title *Zhong benqi jing*, literally "The Origin-Sūtra of the Middle," since the term "middle" apparently refers to the "middle" portion of the life of the Buddha. (The story, then, is also not rounded off with
[17] what is for us the obvious end: the "Complete Extinction" [*parinirvāṇa*],

that is to say, the death of the Buddha.) However, a gloss is added to the Chinese title which reads: "[…] with as second title: 'Concerning the Creation of the Four Groups of the Religious Community,' derived from the *Dīrghāgama*." This alternative title is enlightening for two reasons. In the first place, it clarifies the actual theme, which has little to do with the middle period of the Buddha's life in a chronological sense, and more with the essential moments of his preaching—in which the "four groups" of the religious life, namely the monks' order, the nuns' order, and the male and female lay communities, came into being—a design that serves to embrace the accession of Gautamī as the first female religious, and yet also places the episode from a chronological perspective far after the middle period of the Buddha's life. In the second place, the alternative title, "Concerning the Creation of the Four Groups," allows us to identify this text as an early (and probably very free) version of a "Sūtra on the Four Communities" (*Catuṣpariṣatsūtra*), which is lost, but of which Sanskrit fragments have been found in Central Asia. The addition "derived from the *Dīrghāgama*" is unclear. The extant versions of this "Collection of Long (Sūtras)," which form a section of the Buddhist canon, contain no texts that resemble ours. But the different schools had versions of the canon which differed from one another in some respects, and thus this gloss evidently pertains to a school or sect that, less exclusive than others, granted this text a place in its collection of holy writings.

Our texts were translated by a varying company of non-Chinese monks, among whom the Sogdian Kang Mengxiang formed the steady element: among the translators of the first text, the Indian monk Zhu Dali (Mahābala?) is also named, and among the second the Indian Tanguo (Dharmaphala?). Nothing further is known concerning any of these translators and/or redactors.

The oldest extant bibliography of Chinese Buddhist works (dating to
[18] the second half of the fourth century) mentions an interesting fact about the origin of our text: according to this source, the Chinese version was based on an Indian original from the birthplace of the Buddha, Kapilavastu (in the south of present-day Nepal). This statement is interesting not only because we are almost never informed about the place from which a certain Buddhist work comes, but also because it gives us an indication about the original nature and function of the Buddha biography. According to a view promoted above all by the French scholar Alfred Foucher, the origin of the detailed Buddha narrative with its many precisely localized episodes must be connected with the development of the pilgrimage system. Early on (certainly already by the time of the famous king

and defender of Buddhism, Aśoka, circa 273–232 BCE), the places where, according to tradition, the important events of the life of the Buddha had taken place had become places of pilgrimage. Kapilavastu, where the young Gautama grew up in the palace, and the nearby park Lumbinī, where he was born, naturally belonged to the most beloved places of pilgrimage, to which in later centuries pilgrims from the entire Buddhist world made their way. From the detailed travel accounts of Chinese pilgrims, which form a unique source for the living Buddhism of Central Asia and India, we know how these pious (and often credulous) visitors were treated to detailed stories in every place and at every memorial or object that they were shown by their guides, the more wonderful the better—just as in our days a true religious tourism industry has arisen in Lourdes and Bethlehem. The theory that the pilgrimage system stimulated the elaboration of local episodes and, in a later phase, the integration thereof in a coherent narrative appears to be plausible. If we accept that our text indeed comes from Kapilavastu (a fact that perhaps also coheres with the localization of the preaching itself in that place; compare the opening formula on p. 42), then it is tempting to suppose that we have in hand a unique document: the Chinese version of an edifying story intended for pious visitors, doc-
[19] trinally weak but attractive through its pathos and its picturesque depictions of wonder working—a distant relation of the pious leaflets and sacred stories that fill the stalls in modern-day places of pilgrimage.

Our text differs on many points from other versions of the Buddha narrative handed down in Sanskrit, Pāli, and Chinese; evidently we are dealing with a particular tradition. In this non-specialist translation I will not pursue this further; other versions are only mentioned in the notes when they clear up ambiguities in our text or help to fill in the gaps. Something does need to be said here, however, about the Buddha narrative in general.

Unlike in the nineteenth century, when some scholars felt the need to dismiss the Buddha narrative (in harmony with a then-prevailing scholarly mode) as "solar myth," one nowadays sees little reason to doubt that around 500 BCE a historical person, belonging to the Gautama clan of the Śākya people and who had his residence in the area of Kapilavastu (present-day Tilaurakot in southern Nepal), was the founder of a teaching of liberation, and that he proclaimed this teaching after an overwhelming religious experience, on the basis of which he was called Buddha (the "Awakened" or, less exactly, the "Enlightened"). He made his appearance as a teacher in the mid-Gangetic Plain, in the present-day state of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, where he stayed together with his disciples in

retreats (*vihāra, saṅghārāma*) which were bestowed upon him by local rulers and rich patrons. One is also inclined to consider as historical certain details of the tradition that do not fit in with the otherwise superhuman and superlative character of the story: his humble descent (from an outlying region, born in the obscure Śākya line, never mentioned in non-Buddhist sources), the death of his mother Māyā shortly after his birth, the fact that he was married before his departure and fathered a son, and his death from food poisoning—elements that one can hardly attribute to the
[20] hagiographical imagination of later generations. It is also likely that the curiously negative role played in the tradition by the disciple (and cousin of the Buddha) Devadatta—to whom were ascribed, both before and after his entry into the monastic order, various malignant acts directed against the Buddha—contains a historical element. After the last outrage of this Judas figure, an attempt to poison the Buddha, he was swallowed alive by hell. But even more important seems to be the fact that he caused a schism in the saṅgha by himself founding a rigorous sect, followers of which were found still in the seventh century in India, according to a Chinese pilgrim. The creation of a schism constitutes a deadly sin in Buddhism, and it is quite plausible that this was the action that made Devadatta into a model of depravity in the later tradition.

A number of very fundamental elements of the teaching—in particular the strong emphasis on causality and the teaching of the non-existence of a permanent Self—may also belong to the oldest preaching, but here there is no certainty to be had, because the periods of composition of the many hundreds of writings which together (in different recensions) form the Buddhist canon are extremely difficult to determine.

It is firmly established that the Buddha "biography" in the form of a unified narrative is a late phenomenon. In two of the three subsections of the canon, that of the sermons (*sūtra*) and that of the monastic rules (*vinaya*), we find dispersed a number of fragmentary particulars and short episodes that presumptively represent an old (but, as already said, difficult to date) source of traditions, in which moreover the wondrous and superhuman element is completely absent. The number of episodes also expanded under the influence of local "pilgrim folklore": visits to particular places, miraculous conversions, discussions with sovereigns and prominent citizens, odes for specific occasions, prophecies, and so on. An especially productive source of literary expansion was formed by so-
[21] called birth stories (*jātaka*), which portray events from previous lives of the Buddha. The jātakas, in which the Indian genius for storytelling is allowed to indulge itself (many jātakas are actually Buddhist adapta-

tions of popular tales and anecdotes), grew into an enormous mass of Buddhist folklore. They describe in numberless variations the deeds of the Bodhisattva (the "being destined for Enlightenment," the future Buddha) in earlier lives, in human or animal form, generally classified according to the "six perfect virtues" (*pāramitā*: charity, moral behavior, patience, perseverance, meditation, and wisdom), through which he amassed the karmic merit that in the end would mature him for Buddhahood. The coherent teachings of karma and rebirth made it possible to associate such scenes from earlier existences, lying many cosmic periods in the past, with events from the last life of the Bodhisattva—that in which he attained Buddhahood—and to "account for" these events in karmic causes created in the distant past. Finally, every episode could be "enriched" through the creation of a supernatural environment, both human and superhuman. While in the older canonical tradition the preaching takes place in front of a simple audience of modest dimensions, the later hagiographies ring the Buddha with a public of tens of thousands of monks and notable laypersons, kings, gods, and other supermundane beings of various ranks and stations. The preaching itself becomes a cosmic event, introduced by a ray of light that penetrates the universe and ornamented by multifarious miracles.

It is not known when the accumulated mass of separate episodes was first combined into a more or less continuous narrative. This probably happened repeatedly, in different centers and in different ways, and the works thus formed continued to grow after first being recorded through the addition of more and more material. Versions of the Buddha narrative of very diverse lengths formed of old a section of the collection of monastic rules (*vinaya*) in the different schools; a number of these have been handed down, either in the original languages (Pāli, Sanskrit) or in
[22] later Chinese and Tibetan translations. Outside of the vinaya, other texts of this sort have also been preserved; the most important are the voluminous *Lalitavistara*, composed in a mixture of prose and verse (Sanskrit); the *Buddhacarita*, attributed to Aśvaghoṣa (Sanskrit); the *Mahāvastu*, interspersed with jātakas and extremely chaotic (hybrid Sanskrit); and the *Nidānakathā* in Pāli (the canonical language of "southern" Buddhism). In the Chinese canon one finds, alongside older and younger translations of the first two works mentioned above, a number of works consecrated to the life of the Buddha for which the Indian original is lost; our text is the oldest of these.

It is difficult to say how this text is chronologically related to the others (the date of translation into Chinese is no tenable criterion, since one

work could have been translated shortly after its composition and another not until centuries later). Internal criteria indicate, however, that our text represents a very old phase, not far removed from the starting point, which is to say, from the period in which a continuous narrative first began to be formed out of many separate episodes. This becomes clear from the numerous contradictions in the text, which are apparently a consequence of the incorporation of fresh material from diverse traditions, and which in other Buddha stories were "wiped out" by generations of redactors (some of the most evident contradictions and anachronisms are signaled in the notes). In the second place, the early date becomes clear from the poor intrinsic integration of the contents of the narrative. In the successive versions of the Buddha narrative one notices an increasing tendency to identify with each other persons appearing in different episodes, or in other ways to integrate the scenes into an organic whole. In our text there is little trace of this: the scenes follow one another as separate units and show little mutual cohesion. Finally, the text shows a peculiarity which, although not decisive in and of itself, in combination with the other mentioned characteristics argues for an early dating: the narrative shows hardly any traces of Mahāyāna Buddhism (which became popular about the beginning of the Common Era), typified among other things by a very
[23] strong emphasis on the appearance of a large number of bodhisattvas as saviors in this world, and by certain philosophical-ontological reflections that focus on universal "emptiness" as the basis of all existence, the idea that the appearance of the Buddha in the world is an illusion (ultimately as unreal as the phenomena themselves), and the suggestion that numberless buddhas are simultaneously present in the cosmos, some of whom oust even the historical Buddha as the object of devotion. If we compare our text with the *Lalitavistara*, dominated by Mahāyāna ideas, then it appears that here the Mahāyāna element, although present, has only just arrived on the scene.

The story translated here for the most part speaks for itself—the theme has, after all, since Sir Edwin Arnold sang its praises almost a century ago in his *Light of Asia*, been retold many times in the West, albeit often in a strongly rationalized form. In this book, however, the reader will be confronted with an original version, and much of it will unsurprisingly strike him as strange, hard to digest or incomprehensible. In a publication of this nature, it is impossible, and also unnecessary, to remove all uncertainties. One only needs to provide the framework within which the story takes place: ideas about space and time, the figure of the Buddha,

the role of gods and other superhuman beings, certain highlights of the teaching, and practice of the religious life.

Our world, then, is flat and formed out of four continents (the southern one, Jambudvīpa, is that occupied by humans), arranged around the central mountain Sumeru. Above Sumeru are found a number of heavens layered above each other; under its center lie the hells, likewise arranged in layers. Everything floats on the ocean; the outermost raised edge of the world is formed by a continuous mountain range, the Cakravāḍa mountains. Sun, moon and stars belong to the world, and move around the central mountain. Under the ocean is found the 'ring of wind': a hurricane whirling around so fast that it possesses enough resistance to support the weight of the world. Our world is far from unique: there are billions, 'numerous as the sands of the Ganges.' The worlds are grouped in
[24] 'small' cosmic systems of a thousand parts; a thousand of these form a 'middle sized' system of a million, and a thousand of these galaxies form a 'great' cosmic system of 1,000,000,000 worlds (trisāhasra-mahāsāhasra-lokadhātu, translated by some in an abominable manner as 'trichilio-megachilio-cosmos'). Between these worlds lies dark empty space. The universe comprises an inconceivable number of such 'metagalactic systems.'

As grandiose as the Indian picture of space is that of time. The passage of time is expressed in cosmic time periods or 'aeons' (*kalpa*), each of inconceivable duration. Eighty kalpas form a 'great aeon' (*mahākalpa*), during which a world system is produced, lasts and disappears, and this is followed by an equally long period of nothingness (or, as far as karmic factors are concerned, of a slumbering state). Toward the end of such a period of quiet and darkness, under the influence of the remaining karma of all beings, which must be requited in the following aeon, a wind begins to blow which circulates and becomes ever stronger. Thus originates the cosmic hurricane upon which the new world gradually integrates itself, from bottom to top, and in the same manner it some time will, after billions of years, gradually disintegrate in reverse order, until finally the cosmic wind dies away in emptiness. It is no wonder that these and similar images astonished the Chinese public, accustomed as it was to a more limited picture of time and space, and that many also rejected them as absurd. Somehow we get a glimpse of a contrast between two totally differently oriented world views: India and China, measureless fantasy and fantasy-less measure.

At the center of our story stands the figure of the Awakened One, the Buddha, that is to say, he who through his own effort discovered the ori-

gin of suffering, and found the way to end that suffering—and thereby every form of existence. Throughout the centuries portrayals related to the Buddha figure evolved in the direction of increasing abstraction and superhumanity, but even in the earliest writings the Buddha is a very exceptional being.

[25] In the first place the Buddha is a universal ruler, though not in the customary sense of the word. His body is adorned with the thirty-two special marks that also mark the body of the ideal universal monarch 'who turns the Wheel' (cakravartin)—an old theme in Indian mythology. The foremost attribute of such a ruler is his divine wheel which rolls before his army and brings the whole world into his possession without violence. So too is the Buddha the conqueror, the Victorious One (jina); his wheel is the Wheel of the Teaching which he first set in motion in the Deer Park in Benares.

As spiritual sovereign he is denoted not only as 'the Awakened One,' but also with a series of fixed epithets, of which some regularly occur in our text. Most of these (such as 'the most truly Enlightened One' and 'teacher of gods and men') speak for themselves, as does his personal Buddha-name Śākyamuni, 'the wise one of the Śākya (clan).' One title, Tathāgata, is rendered in the Dutch translation with the Sanskrit term, since the meaning of that epithet has not been satisfactorily clarified: the Sanskrit can mean both 'the thus come' and 'the thus gone'; the Chinese translation *rulai* has only the first sense, which traditionally is explained as 'come (in the world) in the same fashion (namely, as earlier buddhas).'

The Buddha is, however, not only superhuman: he also exceeds the gods, since they still remain mortal, subject to causality, and thus doomed to be reborn sometime in a lower level when their good karma is exhausted. Thus the Buddha stands qualitatively beyond and above all other beings.

In addition, the historical Buddha Śākyamuni is not strictly *the* Buddha but *a* buddha. In innumerable kalpas in the past there were others, and in the distant future others will again appear to resume the preaching. Even though the appearance of a buddha in the world is exceptionally rare, in Buddhist thought Śākyamuni belongs to a *type* of being: he is the fourth buddha of our current aeon, the bhadrakalpa; toward the end of this cosmic
[26] period will appear the fifth, Maitreya. During uncountable lives all have carried out the 'Bodhisattva career' with extreme self-sacrifice and spiritual discipline, a holy path that in later Mahāyāna scholastics is worked out in a detailed scheme of 'ten stages.' The decisive moment for all bodhisattvas comes in the eighth stage, in which they receive from the buddha the solemn prediction of their own future Enlightenment, attaining with

that the state of 'never more to fall back' (*avaivartika*)—this is also the decisive episode with which a buddha from the distant past, 91 aeons ago, proclaimed the decisive judgement (*vyākaraṇa*) about him.

The story takes place in a 'timeless' environment. In whichever cosmic period the scenes take place, they are always placed in the same civilized world of sovereigns, kingdoms, great cities, ministers, rich merchants and courtesans, with an industrious population of farmers and artisans in the background. The picture of prosperous trade is striking: caravans, shipping, rich bankers and a regular use of gold and silver money. It is obvious that all of this is subject to an epic exaggeration: the small potentates of the various political centers (probably more *primi inter pares* than autocratic rulers) regularly venture out with an escort of '84,000 followers', and the cities as a rule are described as powerful metropolises.

But this world of classes, castes and social relations would not be Indian if it were not complemented with its necessary opposite: world renunciation. We continually encounter them in our text: the brahmans who observe the complicated Vedic sacrificial ritual together with their disciples, the long-haired ascetics who subject themselves to the most extreme forms of self-mortification, all sorts of religious observers (*brahmacārins, śramaṇas*), wandering preachers with their adherents, the solitary living 'seers' (*ṛṣi*), and diverse sects, long considered in the Buddhist tradition as rivals and systematized as the 'Six Masters' and their followers. The only one of these which one can historically identify is the sect of the Jainas, continuing to exist until today, denoted in Buddhist texts—and in ours
[27] too—as Nirgranthas, led by their perfidious master Jñātiputra. Buddhist texts offer a caricature of the Jaina teaching; the Nirgranthas are depicted as intriguers and shameless swindlers who rightly taste defeat time after time.

But the environment of our story is not yet complete, since superhuman beings also play a role in almost every scene. Many of them have been adopted from Hindu mythology and folklore. Śakra, the 'ruler of the gods' (originally a denotation of the old Vedic war god Indra) and the god Brahmā are fixtures, and both appear as dedicated devotees of the Buddha. The Four Heavenly Kings (Mahārājika or Lokapāla, 'world protectors'), associated with the four points of the compass, defend the teaching and assist believers; on a lower level this protective role is also played by the yakṣas (demons) under the leadership of the terrifying Pañcika, and sometimes also by the asuras, a sort of titan which in the Buddhist pantheon alternatively plays a good or demonic role. The world in which this story takes place, furthermore, teems with all sorts of supernatural beings who

play a secondary role as admirers: tree spirits, nāgas and mahoragas (snake beings), kinnaras (musician bird-men), garuḍas (harpy eagles), gandharvas (heavenly musicians) and many others.

Even though these figures are for the most part borrowed from a not specifically Buddhist pantheon, in the Buddhist conceptual universe they are accommodated in a characteristic schema that is profoundly interwoven with the fundamental tenets of karma and reincarnation.

In the first place, each form of life into which individuals are born is determined by a positive or negative karmic burden, as a result of which one ends up in one of the 'five stages of existence' (hell being, 'hungry ghost,' animal, human or god). Because the karmic factors will run down (whether through recompense for the bad one performs or through 'using up' positive merit) every form of life is by definition finite. Hence the—at
[28] least to us—remarkable concept that the gods, as mighty and glorious as they are, enjoy their position only temporarily. Even the most elevated god consumes the merit which led him to his elevated state, and must therefore at some time step aside to be reborn in a lower stage. The opposite also regularly takes place: time and again are mentioned humans—or even animals—who are reborn as gods. The transitoriness of every form of existence obviously has favorable consequences for the wretched beings who, thanks to their negative karma, are obliged to pay for their sins as hell beings. Buddhism knows a system of many hells, a sort of infernal counterpart of the multi-level divine world, the description of which, worked out in horrifying details, forms a familiar theme in devotional literature. But existence in hells is also finite—for the undelivered there is neither eternal bliss nor eternal damnation.

The divine world of the Buddhists forms a complicated structure of dozens of levels, each occupied by gods of a certain category, from the lowest and most worldly 'Four Heavenly Kings' who surround Mount Sumeru to the highest and most abstract level of the 'state of neither conscious nor unconscious.' This hierarchy is connected with another presentation, according to which the totality of all living beings is divided into three spheres according to their degree of 'sensuality'. Hell beings, spirits, animals, humans and the six bottom-most heavens together form the 'Sphere of Desire' (*kāmadhātu*), of which the sovereign is the personification of sensual temptation—the god Māra, who as a sort of Lucifer is simultaneously a powerful god and the personification of lust and mortality. As such he serves as the natural antagonist of the Buddha: the struggle with and defeat of Māra (pp. 99–103) symbolizes in mythological terms the fact that the Buddha has broken the power of death and desire.

Above this realm of Māra (to which then various categories of gods also belong) is found the 'Form Sphere' (*rūpadhātu*), in which the majority of material sensations (taste, smell and touch) are absent and only sound and visual form exist, and above that the 'Sphere of the Formless' (*arūpya-*
[29] *dhātu*) in which beings experience only mental sensations. These highest abstract levels are associated with certain forms of spiritual concentration, since even though humans are bound to the lowest sphere, that of complete sensuality and desire, it is still possible mentally to project oneself temporarily to the higher states of being by means of concentration and trance. That is why the highest levels that belong to the Sphere of the Formless carry names which in fact refer to such exercises, such as the already mentioned heaven of 'neither conscious nor unconscious.' Because direct contact with the abstract states of being is a step in the direction of total detachment, such exercises form an essential part of the Buddhist salvific method.

In our text, directed to a lay public, the story is more important than the actual teaching, which in its full dimensions is meant only for practicing monks. The doctrinal sections (such as the spiritual practices and insights preparatory to Enlightenment, the sermons included in the text) are highly abridged and generally also confused and difficult to follow. An additional problem for the non-scholarly reader is posed by the use of numerical categories: the Six Penetrating Powers, the Six Passions, the Five Obstacles, the Four Mental Supports, and so on. Every Buddhist text teems with such technical expressions—justifiably, since what is involved is an extremely specialized and systematic 'methodology,' which requires a characteristic technical jargon. In light of the intention of this publication and the character of the text, the idea to explain all these scholastic concepts for the reader has been renounced; it suffices if the phenomenon is noted. But the teaching of salvation is constantly present in the background, and several fundamental concepts must be indicated here.

Buddhism is not a philosophy but at heart a *method*, a system of well-defined spiritual practices considered ultimately to lead to *Liberation*, that is to say, freedom from the *Suffering* that is the essential mark of all life and existence. In this Buddhism agrees with the overall orientation of Indian thought, which seeks true liberation only in what is eternal,
[30] infinite and imperishable, and thus all transitory things—and this means every form of existence—are equated with instability and decline, loss and separation, and thus with suffering. In Buddhism this suffering embraces the whole individual in all his parts, physical and psychological, because, in contrast to other teachings of liberation, Buddhism emphatically denies

the existence of an 'eternal principle' in persons, a permanent soul or Ego. The person *is* not, but he *consists of*; the individual is the sum of a great number of bodily and mental elements, each of which is in itself continuously subject to change and to the process of causality. The person exists only as a conventional unity, as a wagon exists and functions as a coherent whole, but nevertheless completely disappears if one removes its parts one by one. One can classify the elements in various ways; the most common description of the conglomerate 'person' is a division in five 'bundles' (*skandha*) of elements (in our text obscurely rendered as the 'five dark factors', see p. 103) which combine to form the (pseudo-)person: material Visible Form (*rūpa*), Sensation (*vedanā*), Conceptions (*saṁjñā*), the 'Aggregates' (*saṁskāra*: chiefly conscious and unconscious functions of the will) and Consciousness (*vijñāna*).

The force which holds all of that together and which perpetuates existence (and thus suffering) is *desire*. Desire in the broadest sense of the word, that is to say, every attachment, every striving to be something or someone, with the most fundamental and the most deadly being the 'thirst for existence' (*bhava-tṛṣṇā*): the urge 'to be'. That desire is ultimately based on ignorance, that is to say, on beings' lack of insight into themselves, since what meaning can desire have as long as there is no permanent Ego? Emancipation from the cycle of birth and death is thus only possible through the accomplishment of two almost superhuman tasks: beings' achievement of liberating insight into existence and the thoroughgoing destruction of every form of attachment. Central in this is the concept of karmic *causality*, since existence is seen as an endless
[31] combination of cause and effect. Each being is a causal process.

The chain of causality consists, in its classical formulation, of twelve links: the formula of '*arising in mutual dependence in twelve members*.' There is no agreement over the correct interpretation of this, either among ancient Buddhist scholastics or modern researchers. In any event, it is an attempt to describe the evolution of the complex 'person' as a mechanical process, controlled by the law of causality. The first member is *Ignorance*, that is to say unawareness of suffering and attachment as its cause. From Ignorance originate the *Aggregates* (inclinations, impulses, expressions of the will), from which emerges the reborn *Consciousness* (as first beginning of a new existence), and thence *Name-and-Form* (the individual). The *Six Senses* originate from the formation of the individual, and from this *Contact* (with the outside world) and *Perception*. This sense contact produces '*Thirst*' (yearning) and this leads to '*Graspings*', which implies that one performs karmically laden acts. Thus this leads to a new *Existence*, with

Birth and *Old Age-and-Death* as consequences. However unclear, this series is considered one of the most central doctrines of Buddhism; the Buddha himself discovered and formulated it on the night of his Enlightenment. A permanent Ego plays no role in this chain. The conglomerate that forms a person is born, suffers, perishes and integrates itself anew after death as an analogical system, whereby the continuing element is not a 'soul' but the unrecompensed karma from previous lives.

Liberation is attained by complete elimination of all attachment; among the many means applied toward this the mental concentrations (*samādhi*) and the progressive series of four stages of meditation or trance (*dhyāna*) occupy a particularly important place. The state of complete detachment is named 'Extinguishing' (Nirvāṇa). It is a negative concept: all that one can say about it is that it signifies the end of the karmic process, the stopping of the cycle of rebirth. It is only logical in the Buddhist way of think-
[32] ing that nothing more can be said about this indescribable state. Both the existence of the liberated one after death and his complete erasure are rejected as 'extreme standpoints'; Nirvāṇa differs qualitatively from everything that the intellect, seized by ignorance and desire, can know. The attainment of Nirvāṇa, moreover, does not coincide directly with death; the word 'Extinguishing' refers to desire, not to physical existence. One who has attained the state of freedom, the arhat (saint), can continue his remaining bodily existence still for many years, just as the Buddha did. At the end of his last existence he deliberately shakes off his mortal remains and attains in this manner 'Complete Extinguishing' (Parinirvāṇa).

As a method to bring an end to attachment and suffering the teaching is often summarized in the formula of the 'four noble truths': 1. that suffering is universal; 2. that it arises from desire; 3. that removal of desire eliminates suffering; and 4. that the way which leads to this comes down to the Eightfold Path: 'right view, right intention, right speech, right conduct, right living, right effort, right thinking, right concentration'—in brief, a completely regulated manner of thinking, speaking, acting and meditating.

Adoption of these means practicing and making exhaustive effort, both physically and mentally. Therefore, the path to liberation cannot be pursued in the householder's state, but only in a life of uninterrupted religious practice, physical discipline, meditation and trance. The existence of the Order of begging monks (*bhikṣu*) and nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*) is therefore essential; it is not without reasons that in the formula of the 'Three Jewels' (Triratna; in the translation of the Chinese text rendered as 'Three Venerables') the saṅgha appears as equal alongside the Buddha and the Teaching.

In principle the saṅgha is open to everyone, assuming that his or her ordination does not provoke any conflict with a third party. The monastic life is governed by a great number of regulations, based on disciplinary pronouncements which are attributed to the Buddha himself. The rules vary from sanctions on the most severe offenses, which are punished with
[33] permanent expulsion, to innumerable detailed prescriptions dealing with eating, clothing, preparation of medicines and other things for everyday usage. The life was ascetic without, however, going to the extreme of mortification. Every form of material comfort is forbidden, the monastic may possess no money nor accept it as a gift, and he may possess only a few personal objects. His food for the single meal he may consume per day must be gathered on an alms round, unless he is invited to a meal by a pious layman. Only on this alms round is it permitted for him to linger in a city or village. The remainder of the day and a great deal of the night he is expected to be busy with spiritual practices in the retreat (*vihāra*).

Such retreats, which sometimes later grew into great monasteries, were originally intended as temporary residences, in principle only meant for residence during the rainy season (July–October). During the remainder of the year the monks were required to lead a wandering life—a lifestyle that is still very prominent in our text. In practice most religious ultimately became sedentary. The retreats were the property of the Order, because the saṅgha was able, in contrast to the individual monk, to possess major property and administer it collectively. They owed their origin to the gifts of rich lay followers who bestowed pieces of ground, preferably parks and orchards, on the Order. The tradition knows a number of such donations which were given even in the time of the Buddha; some of them form well-known episodes in the Buddha narrative. They form an important theme in texts such as ours, directed toward a lay public: a certain emphasis on the virtues and karmic worth of such generous donors could do no harm, and a good example would always inspire others.

Notwithstanding the necessity of their existence—the saṅgha is, after all, completely dependent on worldly support—at least in old Buddhism the laity formed a marginal group in the religious life. In exchange for their gifts they receive edifying education and blessing; conversion and pious behavior lead them to favorable rebirth in the future, and protection by good powers in this life. They become Buddhists through the utterance of a simple formula of 'refuge' in the Buddha, the Teaching and
[34] the saṅgha, whereby they pledge themselves to certain rules, such as not to kill living beings and to abstain from theft, lies and lewdness. Four or six days a month during the fasts the laypeople keep several additional

precepts; on such days they, just as the monks, take but a single meal a day. Striving for Liberation as such is rendered impossible for them by their innumerable social obligations; for them, the way to salvation runs via simple devotion and good works. The element of 'faith' in a powerful and supernatural being was strongly developed in these circles. The omnipotence and omniscience of the buddhas and saints appeal to the laity more than the subtleties of the teaching; it is certainly no accident that in our text the full emphasis falls on the performance of miracles and the display of magical powers.

In conclusion, a word about the form of the text and the manner of its translation. The text has the form of a sermon (*sūtra*), as emerges not only from the title but also from the stereotypical opening passage, in which the location and circumstances of the preaching are given, and the equally stereotyped final formula, in which those in the audience testify to their delight in the words of the Buddha. For the most part the text consists of dialogue in direct speech; the Western reader must become accustomed to the monotony which results from this. This holds all the more for the repetitions and enumerations which are both hallmarks of this style. But in that respect our text does not put us to an overly severe test. The Indian literary tradition, with its tendency toward sometimes extreme verbosity and endless literal repetition of passages, did not find fertile soil in China, since it ran completely counter to the Chinese preference for short, concise writing and stylistic variation. The freedom the Chinese redactors permitted themselves appears most clearly from the manner in which certain literary clichés, fixed verbatim in the Indian original, are reproduced in our text. A good example is the stereotyped description of the manner in which someone first beholds the Buddha
[35] and thereby is impressed by his appearance. The original formula reads: "Then So-and-So saw the Lord, adorned with the thirty-two marks of a Great Man, his body gleaming with the eighty secondary marks, the light of a thousand suns outshone by his fathom-wide halo, like a moving mountain of gems, good in every respect." This scene appears nine times in our text, but in each case in different wording, and always reduced to several essential elements (for example, p. 112: "then he saw his hallowed and wonderful appearance…"; p. 126: "there they saw the Lord in the distance, surrounded by a light that illuminated the world…"; p. 139: "as soon as he saw from afar the clear light that radiated from the bodily marks and beauty signs of the Tathāgata…"). So too the series of ten epithets, which in the Indian original describe the glory of Buddhahood in its full extent: "the Tathāgata, the one worthy of honor, the correctly

Awakened One, furnished with knowledge and (correct) conduct, the well-gone one, knower of the world, unsurpassed tamer of those who are to be tamed (by him), teacher of gods and men, the Awakened One, the Lord". Only in two places do we find the whole series (p. 107, repeated, with a small variation, p. 111), while in the seven remaining instances it is drastically shortened, or very freely represented by the words "he realized salvation and obtained the title 'Buddha'" (pp. 183, 206). If our text communicates in a few words that a certain blessed event was accompanied with an earthquake (conceived of as an auspicious sign) (p. 119), then the original text probably regaled the reader with a stereotyped description of six or even eighteen different types of seismic phenomena, specified by intensity and direction. And the simple greeting formula "Remain you in peace in all you do?" (p. 126, 164) surely conceals the considerably more elaborate cliché: "Have you little illness, little trouble? Does it go well for you? Are you in good condition? Are you strong? Are you comfortable?" This tendency toward abbreviation and stylistic variation, which can be verified with certainty in the reproduction of literary clichés, leads to the suspicion that many other passages were also adjusted to the tastes of the
[36] Chinese public in the same manner by the editors. It is not clear why this has not happened in one section (the description of Gautamī's entry into the monastic community, v. p. 176); in this spot the reader can get some idea of what he has been spared thanks to the Chinese redactors.

One of the most striking features of this style is the alternation of prose and verse (*gāthā*s). The verses were originally sung and sometimes also accompanied by music; they serve various functions in the narrative. Sometimes they convey the words of a speaker, or paraphrase the preceding prose passage. Other times their usage is less clearly marked, and the passages in verse can also contain both descriptive portions and the words spoken by one or more persons. Such Buddhist hymns seldom have poetic value, the more so since in their Chinese translations the ingenious metrical figures of the Indian originals are replaced by a monotonous rattle of four, five or seven syllables. Notwithstanding the poor quality of the verses, this originally Indian combination of verse and prose, which gives the narrative a certain lively feeling, struck a chord at a popular level in China; it is one of the few Buddhist figures of speech which remain alive in Chinese narrative literature until the present day.

The translation of an early Chinese version of a lost Indian original, in such a manner that the hybrid character of the text and the stylistic idiosyncrasies remain recognizable, involves a number of special problems, for some of which no satisfactory solution is to be found. Because

the Chinese text is a very free adaptation, a faithful reconstruction of the Indian prototype is impossible. In spite of this I have endeavored to bring out the Indian original by rendering the personal names with their Sanskrit equivalents, wherever these are discoverable (in itself a debatable procedure, because it is entirely possible that the original was not in Sanskrit but in one or another Middle Indic language). In the translation of technical terms, on the other hand, I have on the whole reproduced the Chinese forms (which are generally rather free, and sometimes even based on misunderstandings). In a number of cases these are derived from Reli-
[37] gious Daoism, and thus one can wonder whether in these contexts they must be preserved according to their Daoist understanding (for example Dao, the 'Way,' in the meaning of the ordering principle in Nature). Or whether they are to be interpreted as awkward representations of Buddhist understandings (Dao, 'the Way to Salvation'). Sometimes such terms are extremely misleading. Thus the understanding of 'abandoning the world (to devote oneself to the religious life)' is repeatedly rendered with 'enter into the mountains,' in harmony with the Daoist conception that Immortals prefer to stay on mountain tops, and the idea of the 'universal ruler' (p. 25) is indicated as a 'flying emperor,' making use of a term probably borrowed from Chinese folk beliefs. Even though our narrative takes place in the flat Gangetic Plain, and the cakravarin is not in the habit of flying but of progressing on his wondrous horse, in order to retain the Chinese element, no matter how misleading they may be I have translated these and other such equivalents literally.

The biggest translation problem is created by the idiosyncratic style and word choice of the Chinese text. In contrast to Classical Chinese texts, which require a rendering in lofty and polished language, and to popular tales in which the translator may express himself in modern vernacular speech, these texts are written in a strange melange of Classical Chinese and vernacular. It is unknown if this hybrid style was employed with the intention of increasing the comprehension of the story, or whether it is a result of the meager education of the Chinese redacteurs, who meant well but made a failed attempt to write Classical Chinese. I have striven in the translation to maintain this melange of official style and vulgarisms, and to bring out in other respects as well the simple and somewhat awkward character of the narrative style. The style of the portions in verse is clearly 'more solemn' than that of the prose, hence the use of 'thou' (Dutch *gij*) and of certain amount of biblical language in the translation of the gāthās. In contrast to almost all Chinese poetry, the Buddhist gāthās are always unrhymed; for this reason, and in order to give the reader an impression

[38] of the monotonous character of the poetical passages (we must take into account, however, that they were sung), I have chosen blank verse for the translation, in which each stressed syllable corresponds to a single Chinese syllable.

It would be an exaggeration to label our text a 'masterwork of Eastern literature.' But I hope that in translation, the first in any Western language, it gains a certain importance against the historical and religious background which I have sketched in this introduction: a grand theme, told in simple language for the members of a small community which sought, in difficult and chaotic times, a new ideal—not, as later extensive versions, the crystalized products of a great, already blossomed religious movement, but a first hesitant beginning that sometimes is poignant precisely by its awkwardness—a small exotic flower that began to bloom in the ruins of the Han dynasty.

For Western readers the story fizzles out—the end is formed not by the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha, but rather by a wholly unimportant episode in which the Buddha and his followers, in a region afflicted by a famine, are forced to eat horse feed. Concluding the life story of Śākyamuni, the following:

According to a unanimous tradition of all schools the Buddha, after leading a wandering life with his disciples for over forty years, attained in the eightieth year of his life 'Complete Extinction' in a little town, Kuśinagara (present-day Kasia, east of Gorakhpur).

When the Buddha and his most beloved disciple Ānanda were in retreat in the city of Vaiśālī, the first symptoms of a severe dysentery appeared. The Buddha suppressed the illness since he did not wish to enter Parinirvāṇa without having taken leave of the other disciples who were staying in Vaiśālī. When he was reunited with the monks, Ānanda asked him to give guidance for the Order after his death, but the Buddha refused: he did not want to be a leader who gives instructions for the future; the monk must consult himself and the Teaching, and nothing else. Shortly thereafter Māra appeared for the last time, and the Buddha promised him that after three months he would attain Complete
[39] Extinction.

The direct cause of his death was, according to the tradition, the eating of pork, presented to him by a well intentioned layman, 'the smith Cunda' (this is not impossible, since the eating of meat is only forbidden to monks if the animal is slaughtered for his meal). Immediately after that the illness flared up again, and he was tortured by severe pains. After resting

for a short time, he crossed over the river and finally stretched himself out on his right side between two śāla trees which stood, out of season, in full bloom. In the last hours of his life the Buddha gave various sermons. He specified the four great pilgrimage places (his birthplace in Lumbinī, the site of his Enlightenment (in present-day Bodh Gayā), the site of his sermon in the Deer Park in Benares, and the site where he currently was). He also performed his last conversion. In the third watch of the night he directed his farewell words to the monks: 'Now, monks, I say to you: all compounded things are transitory—strive with devotion!'

Thereafter he sank into the first stage of trance (*dhyāna*), moved from there to the second, and progressed thus through all the stages of spiritual concentration until he attained the eighth and highest level, in which there is nothing of consciousness or perception, nor of its absence. From the highest state he progressed back again through all the stages in reverse order, and then again back upwards to the second and the third. At the moment that he reached the fourth level of dhyāna, he attained Parinirvāṇa.

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BUDDHISM IN A PRE-MODERN BUREAUCRATIC EMPIRE: THE CHINESE EXPERIENCE

I. *Introductory Remarks*

The study of Chinese Buddhism is largely a study in acculturation. It deals with the various ways in which a huge and heterogeneous body of foreign beliefs and practices, itself subject to constant accretion, change and diversification, came to be incorporated into the even more complex fabric of Chinese culture. The process of adaptation probably had started already in the second century CE, when a number of primitive translations of Buddhist scriptures were produced by the first "mixed" translation teams, and it went on even after the last fresh impulses from abroad had ceased. In some respects it is still going on today.

In all its aspects—religious beliefs and practices, monastic organization, attitude towards the temporal authorities, relations between clergy and lay believers, philosophical speculations and scholastic studies, literary expression, economic and welfare activities, material culture and art—Buddhism was deeply influenced, and in some sectors completely transformed, by a great variety of forces, tensions, attitudes and orientations that were part of the Chinese cultural environment. Taken as a whole, Chinese Buddhism can be regarded as a classical illustration of the process of cultural transmission and adaptation, as it shows all degrees and varieties of response, ranging from total absorption of some elements (even to the point of practically losing their Buddhist identity) to total rejection, with all intermediary types of selective adoption, adaptation, hybridization, amalgamation, compartmentalization and restructuring.

In this paper I shall not attempt to present a chronological survey of the integration of Buddhism into the ethical, political educational, economic and social life of the Chinese. Nor shall I venture into the tricky and somewhat fruitless subject of periodization, mainly because in dealing with such an extremely complex and articulated phenomenon evolving
[402] in time, it is virtually impossible to devise a scheme of periodization that will hold good for all parts of the complex. Thus, if we want to define the first major turning point in the history of Chinese Buddhism, we could

opt for 311 CE (the occupation of northern China by barbarian invaders and the beginning of a long period of disunity and regional growth) if we want to focus on geographical diversification; doctrinally, we should prefer the activities of Kumārajīva and his school in the early fifth century; and economically, the most obvious watershed would be the outburst of large-scale clerical landholding coupled with industrial and financial enterprises in the early Tang, say around 600 CE.

In this paper I shall concentrate on the cultural environment, the Chinese matrix in which Buddhism came to function. I have chosen this approach because it seems to fit the nature of a symposium devoted to the study of Buddhism in a comparative framework. In such a perspective, little would be gained by a mere juxtaposition of descriptive accounts dealing with Buddhism in various regions of Asia. The varieties of Buddhism may become more significant if we place them in their respective contexts, and try to compare the ways in which Buddhism functions in various types of societies. The underlying assumption is, of course, that there *is* such a thing as a typology of political and socioeconomic systems, and that, in other words, a number of essential features of Chinese Buddhism in the pre-modern period are not just due to random development, fate, or the "genius of the Chinese people", but that they can be related to the basic orientations of a pre-modern, agrarian-based, centralized bureaucratic empire with a dominant élite of scholar-officials and a universalistic state ideology. Of course such a correlation should not be seen as a simple, mechanistic, one-to-one correspondence. In some cases the relations are obvious and direct: thus the typical Tang institution of bureaucratic control of the Buddhist clergy through the Bureau of Sacrifices, an organ of the Ministry of Rites, can be directly associated with some well-known traits in the political system. In other cases the link is more tenuous and somewhat speculative: the strong emphasis on the realization of the transcendent Buddha-nature may have been stimulated by the deep-rooted notion of the perfectibility of man, which in turn is the individualized counterpart of one of the basic assumptions in the traditional ideology: the perfectibility of human society. But even if we can assume that this Confucian assumption provided a certain stimulus, or at least created a certain familiarity with the ideal of moral and spiritual self-cultivation, it is obvious that the whole orientation of the Buddhist ideal is fundamentally different. The ideal of perfect man has, so to speak, become de-socialized, and that was precisely the reason why it was attacked by Neo-Confucian thinkers as anti-social and therefore useless. In the same way, it may

be true that one of the most characteristic phenomena of Chinese Buddhism, the Tiantai doctrine, a complicated scholastic attempt to reorganize the whole body of the Buddha's teaching into a chronological and methodological scheme devised to explain away all doctrinal differences between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna teachings, basically was an expression of the Chinese urge to avoid conflict and to harmonize different opinions, which in turn is deeply rooted in the traditional norms of social and political behaviour. Or, it may be regarded as an expression of the Chinese genius for classification and organization. But here again, the link is at best indirect. If we attempt to draw the contours within which Chinese Buddhism developed, we can only tentatively indicate a configuration of forces that stimulated some developments while curbing others, an indication of certain zones of tension and potential conflict, alternating with
[403] neutral spaces which Buddhism was free to fill up. It should never become a deterministic scheme that excludes the possibility of autonomous and creative activity of the human mind, and the free choice between alternatives. But even so, I believe that for a comparative study this approach may be fruitful, because it would enable us to contrast the functioning of Buddhism in a pre-modern bureaucratic empire with its behavior in, say, a patrimonial tribal state, or a feudal system, or a commercial oasis kingdom, or—why not?—a modern industrial state, or a developing country in the process of nation-building and cultural integration.

Before I present, in skeleton-form, a survey of what I suppose to be the major factors that have been active in shaping the course of Chinese Buddhism, three more warnings.

In the first place: as any sinologist will immediately recognize, the table mainly reflects the world-view of a small ruling élite: the court, the top of the imperial bureaucracy, and the highest level of the literate minority—altogether perhaps five per cent of the population, probably even less than that. Of course this political and intellectual élite was of supreme importance, but we should remember that the recorded history of Chinese Buddhism is mainly the history of the confrontation and interaction of a tiny top of courtiers, administrators and prominent literati and an equally minuscule élite from among the clergy: the minority of prominent clerics, learned scholiasts, and cultured defenders of the faith. Only very rarely, as in the case of the Dunhuang documents, do we have primary materials containing information about developments among the mass of the population and among the lower strata of the literate minority. This is important for our approach, because it is obvious that the whole pattern

would be quite different from the one I am presenting here, if we were to focus on the mass of the population rather than on the cultured minority. In many cases, the picture would have to be reversed. To mention only one example: the privileged position claimed by the Buddhist monastery (in terms of independence from secular authorities, exemption from taxes and corvée labour, relative freedom from Government interference, and the possibility of engaging in various forms of economic enterprises) forms an obvious zone of conflict and tension if seen from the standpoint of the ruling minority, because it conflicts with several principles, as listed below: the theory of the all-inclusive nature of imperial authority, the need to control local communities, the need to have sufficient manpower for taxation and corvée labour, and in general, the negative attitude towards non-agricultural economic activities beyond Government control. But as soon as we switch over to the perspective of the mass of the exploited population, it becomes clear that at that level the relative independence of the Buddhist monastery was not a source of tension, but rather a positive integrating factor: at that level, the monastery could function as a haven of refuge, as a means to escape oppressive taxation, to obtain a minimum of social security, to get at least some education, or as an outlet for marginal elements and drop-outs. An element eliminated at the top level can become highly productive at the popular level: the idea of karmic retribution by rebirth has not been able to influence even to the slightest extent the official ideology: there is no trace of it in any systematization of Confucian doctrine. On the other hand, it has become a basic theme in popular literature and popular art down to the present day where it obviously has an integrative function. In other words: the scheme should be refined by paying due attention to social stratification.

Secondly: the scheme suggests a static, unchanging cultural environment, which is misleading. The some cases, a factor exerts a powerful influence
[404] on the development of Chinese Buddhism, too powerful to be excluded, but only during a certain period. Cases in point are the role of the large landed estates and the privileges of the great semi-aristocratic families, which do not extend beyond the ninth century, or the existence of a large centralized empire, which always maintained itself as a kind of political ideal (and therefore always influenced the thought of the élite), but which only was realized (and imperfectly realized, at that) during less than one-half of the period under consideration.

In the third place: the impression of a stable matrix in which Buddhism is developing, is misleading. Precisely by its attempts to digest Buddhism,

the matrix itself is changing. If the Buddhist clergy is subjected to secular government control, something happens with secular government itself, for it comes to incorporate a religious function which it did not have before: it becomes, as it were, contaminated with a doctrine of individual salvation and monastic discipline by assuming responsibility for it. In the same way, if the Buddhist clergy, at least from the sixth century onward, is praying for the emperor's health and well-being, it is not only a clerical adoption of a well-known bureaucratic custom. It also means that a bit of Buddhist devotion—or magic—has become incorporated into the court ceremonial, and into the ritual justification of imperial rule, *i.e.*, into the very heart of the Great Tradition of Confucianism. Or, to adduce a somewhat paradoxical example: the very denial of Buddhism has no doubt been one of the shaping forces in the Neo-Confucian revival; by its very rejection Buddhism helped to change Confucianism.

But after these cautionary remarks, which may have done much to undermine the very basis of this paper, let us turn to what I would consider the major factors in the Chinese cultural environment that have been instrumental in shaping Chinese Buddhism.

II. *The Chinese Environment*

A. *Political System and Ideology*

1. The persisting ideal (only realized in certain periods) of a unified, centralized bureaucratic empire.
2. The supernatural sanction of imperial rule: the "Mandate of Heaven", hence the conception of all-embracing imperial authority, including the sphere of religious beliefs and practices.
3. Sino-centric view of the world: fundamental superiority of the Chinese social and political order.
4. The perfectibility, in a moral sense, of human society, and the (re)creation of perfect society based on hierarchical order and harmony, as the ultimate aim of government; "transformation by (moral) instruction" (*jiaohua* 教化).
5. The bureaucracy as the instrument of imperial rule, including the latter's religious functions.
6. Recruitment of future officials on the basis of "merit", *i.e.*, (theoretically) moral standing and literary training, first through a system of recommendation, later through competitive literary examination.

7. The notion of the organic interrelation of state and cosmos: portents and miraculous happenings indicating the moral well-being or deca-
[405] dence of the ruling house.
8. Composite nature of, and tensions within, the ruling elite: the court (the emperor, his family and relatives-in-law, (imperial favorities, eunuchs); the bureaucracy; (until the Late Tang) the leaders of the "great families"; regional powers.
9. Ruling élite and the local communities: very limited possibilities of effective political control, hence constant fear of "subversive" movements at grass-roots level, and attempts to exert some measure of supervision through heads of local groups with collective responsibility.

B. *Social*

1. The family and well-ordered family life as the basis of society; gentry ideal of the large patriarchal family; codification of family mores ("family instructions"); official sanctions against transgression of family morals.
2. Important role of "associations" (with various social, economic, religious, and welfare functions) at the local level, usually under gentry leadership, often organized as pseudo-kinship groups.
3. Subordinate position of women, both in the family system and in other forms of social organization.
4. Rigid class divisions in medieval Chinese society; after the Late Tang the oligarchy of "great families" gradually changes into domination by a larger "gentry" class.

C. *Economic*

1. The agrarian basis of the state; negative attitude of the ruling élite towards merchants and other "non-productive" occupational groups.
2. The scarcity of manpower subject to taxation and corvée labour.
3. Periodic bankruptcy of the state, and the urge to find additional sources of income.
4. Growth of large *latifundia* since the early medieval period; economic privileges of the large landowners.
5. Financial activities and industrial enterprise in the great landed estates.
6. The growing importance of the cities as centers of economic activity, and the increasing prosperity of urban groups below the level of the élite.

D. *World-view and Religion*

1. The conception of the perfectibility of man as a social-being.
2. The concept of "sin" as a disturbance of the natural order, and expiation of sin through self-incrimination.
3. Diffuse religion: religious practices traditionally embedded in social and political structures (community cults, ancestor worship, sacrifices made by emperor and officials, etc.).
4. Ritualized religion; belief in the efficacy of sacrificial rites and formu-
[406] lae; very few traces of devotionalism among the cultured élite.
5. Semi-materialistic conception of the universe: *yin-yang* 陰-陽 and the Five Elements; *qi* 氣 "ether" (in various degrees of condensation and rarefaction) as the substance of all phenomena.
6. Traditional demonology; vague and conflicting ideas about the afterlife.
7. Limited and concrete representation of time and space; in general, a strong tendency to express abstract notions by means of concrete images.
8. Negative attitude of the cultured élite towards local ("vulgar") religious cults; distinction between "officially approved" and "heterodox" religious beliefs and practices.
9. The existence of a Daoist religious and philosophical tradition, some elements of which at times became influential among a part of the cultural élite (mystic realization of Unity-in-diversity; non-activity; retirement from office to preserve one's purity; the cult of Nature; rejection of conventional norms).

E. *Literary and Educational*

1. Long-standing literary and scholarly tradition; prestige of scholarship and learning.
2. Moralistic orientation of traditional scholarship and literature.
3. Early development of historiography, based on a conception of history that is partly moralistic, partly derived from early cosmological speculations.
4. The use of a script that transcends dialectical differences.
5. Almost universal use of a petrified classical Chinese as the medium of literary expression.
6. Standardization of literary and scholastic training due to the examination system.

III. *An Illustration: Buddhist Legitimation of Dynastic Rule*

The influence of the configuration of environmental forces and the interaction of these forces with certain elements of Buddhism may be illustrated in some detail by the various ways in which Buddhism was used by the state (and in particular by the court) to provide a legitimation of imperial rule and a magic support to the dynasty.

The traditional legitimation of imperial rule was based on the well-known political myth of the Mandate of Heaven, according to which the founder of the dynasty (and by inheritance, but in a diminishing degree, his successors) was charged by Heaven to preserve order and harmony in the world of man. The Mandate was manifested through the signs of Heaven (auspicious omens if the ruler's virtue was up to standard; warning portenta if it was declining), by signs of popular support, and by conditions of peace and prosperity. The special relations between the emperor as *pontifex maximus* and Heaven was symbolized by elaborate rules of ritual behavior; his unique position was constantly stressed in terminology and in traditional historiography; it was manifested by imperial prerogatives such as the promulgation of the calender and the periodic change of reign periods. The impressive ritual of the imperial sacrifice to Heaven served as the annual manifestation of the emperor's "filial" relation with the highest principle of Cosmic Order, therefore as the clearest
[407] confirmation of legitimacy.

This traditional complex was after the fourth century, and particularly in the Sui and Tang periods, reinforced by adoption of a number of elements of Buddhist inspiration. The main elements that Buddhism could supply as additional means of legitimation and magic protection were the following:

(*a*) The notion of the *cakravartin*, the pious universal king, and the Buddhist legendary account of Aśoka's conversion and devotion;
(*b*) The manifestation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the world, coupled with the concept of *upāyakauśalya*, the "skill in expedient means", which enables them to manifest themselves in any form they choose, and to use any means to convert and save their audience;
(*c*) The stereotyped series of miraculous signs (many-coloured rays of light, apparitional flowers, several kinds of earthquake, "sweet dew", etc.) that were believed to have accompanied auspicious happenings, such as the Buddha's birth, his Enlightenment, his intention to preach an important *sūtra*, etc.;

(*d*) The karmic efficacy of prayer, chanting of sacred texts, and sacrifice of incense and flowers;

(*e*) The belief that the karmic "merit" amassed by pious works—including those mentioned above—can be transferred to another person or group;

(*f*) The supernatural powers acquired through the practice of the religious life;

(*g*) The spiritual protection promised to devotees and to benefactors of Buddhism.

It should be noted that in their original context these traits do not belong together; they are taken from various sectors of Buddhist religious lore. However, in China they became integrated into a new complex with a specific function.

From early times the *cakravartin* ideal became popular among the Chinese Buddhist élite. The Buddhist image of the pious universal monarch could not but remind them of the traditional Chinese ideal of the saintly ruler, bearer of the Mandate of Heaven, to whose authority the whole world comes to submit. In fact, the attempt to find remains of the 84,000 stūpas of Aśoka in China (which, being part of Jambudvīpa, once should have been part of Aśoka's empire) resulted after the fourth century in a curious kind of pious archaeology that yielded a rich harvest of relics and other objects. Many of these were reported to the court as "auspicious omens". This again accorded with Chinese custom. At least since Han times, the discovery of "auspicious objects", often accompanied by luminous emanations and other supernatural signs, had been regarded as tangible proof of virtuous government. The so-called relics of Aśoka—often found by people with close connections with the court—not only proved the existence of Buddhist in China in a distant part, but also served as "auspicious responses" (*ruiying* 瑞應) of Heaven, confirming the legitimacy of imperial rule.

In two cases Chinese emperors are known to have consciously identified themselves with the *cakravartin* ideal: the fervently Buddhist emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (reigned 502–549), who probably did so in a sincere attempt to imitate Aśoka, and the ruthless founder of the Sui dynasty, emperor Wen (581/589–605), who may have used the Buddhist theme as a matter of political strategy.

Emperor Wen even followed Aśoka's example by distributing "relics"
[408] and by building more than a hundred shrines all over the empire, which in turn led to a spate of new discoveries of relics found at the most improb-

ably places: in the course of the year 601 the emperor and the empress repeatedly discovered them in their food when they were eating. The propagandistic element was obviously very strong: there was a steady flow of reports about auspicious signs and objects that manifested themselves in or near the shrines, including such typically Chinese ominous objects as inscribed jades and auspicious animals. This again shows how Buddhist notions had merged with Chinese traditional symbols and practices of supernatural dynastic legitimation.

Both monarchs were also styled "Bodhisattvas", just as previously the rulers of the Northern Wei empire had been held to be manifestations of the Tathāgata, and as the early Tang empress Wu Zetian would justify her usurpation of the throne by posing as an incarnation of Maitreya. In fact, since the early seventh century, many rebellious leaders have used this legitimation.

But although few rulers actually went so far as to pose as incarnations, it became a regular custom to place the dynasty under the magical protection of a special class of monks within the *Saṅgha.* This was done by the institution of a peculiar type of official temple, founded and materially supported by the state, with the express duty to perform religious ceremonies for the well-being of the emperor and his ancestors, the prosperity and stability of the state, and the spiritual comfort of soldiers who had died in battle. A whole series of such "national temples", established in the provincial capitals, and all bearing the same name, was founded by successive imperial decrees: The Daxingguo temples 大興國寺 under the Sui, the Guofen temples under the Tang emperor Gaozong, the Kaiyuan si 開元寺 under Xuanzang, etc. In good Mahāyāna fashion, the merit resulting from prayer and the reading of scriptures could be transferred to another being or collective body—but in this case it was the dynasty and the state. It was also, to some extent, the Buddhist version of the traditional Chinese belief that the dynasty can be magically supported by sacrifice, prayer, and abstinence. Accordingly, one of the most popular scriptures to be read in the national temples was the "scripture on the Benevolent King that gives protection to the state" (*Renwang huguo jing* 仁王護國經).

In this example two important facts can be observed. In the first place, is the process of "restructuring", by which a number of originally disparate Buddhist elements were combined into a new complex. Secondly, it should be noted that in this particular case Buddhism played a positive, supporting role *vis-a-vis* the official ideology. It accorded with certain traditional ideas and practices, and was at the same time able to enrich

them. Apart from its obvious affinity with certain traditional means of ideological justification, it was also in agreement with some other environmental factors such as the mechanistic nature of prayer and sacrifice, ancestoral worship, and the traditional distinction between official, government-approved cults and the "vulgar" world of popular religion.

IV. *Types of Integration*

If Chinese Buddhism can to a large extent be analysed in terms of response to environmental factors, this does not mean that we can do so on the basis of one single model of integration. The whole process is far too complicated to be explained by one single mechanism of cultural transmission.

[409] In some cases, a completely new development is "triggered" by the introduction of a Buddhist element, in a way that reminds us of stimulus diffusion. Thus, Buddhism introduced certain basic ideas about the management of monasteries, but in China this impetus eventually led to a complicated system of monastic ranks and offices, disciplinary rules, and administrative procedures, which does not seem to owe anything to foreign examples.

In other cases, however, a complex of Buddhist ideas is less productive, or even totally unproductive: the body of alien notions is then "compartmentalized" in a certain closed milieu without exerting a creative stimulus on the wider cultural environment. To some extent, this applies to the limited influence of the extremely technical Vijñānavādin doctrine, always the domain of a tiny élite of specialized scholar-monks, certainly so if we compare it to the huge impact of the Mādhyamika doctrine. The totally encapsulated position of the study of Indian logic is another example.

An extremely interesting case of compartmentalization can be observed in the whole complex of Buddhist notions concerning cosmology, cosmography, geography and, in general, ideas concerning the nature and composition of the physical world. The first signs of this phenomenon date from around 400 CE, when Chinese clerics in their own writings began to use terms and concepts borrowed from the alien system. It marked the beginning of a remarkable dichotomy in Chinese proto-science: the Indian "Four Great Elements" operating alongside Yin-Yang and the Five Elements; the "Four Continents" around Mt. Meru *versus* traditional Chinese geographic notions; the vast Buddhist panorama of cosmic periods

and of the periodic destruction and reintegration of the universe *versus* the Chinese belief in a recorded human history of a few millennia and an unbroken cyclic movement of dynastic rise and decline; the Buddhist plurality of inhabited worlds and innumerable world-systems *versus* the Chinese earth-centered cosmos, etc. This process of juxtaposition, in which a large body of Indian Buddhist lore was borrowed *in isolation*, without in any degree influencing the "official" world-view (as, *e.g.*, represented in the Chinese official compendia) reached its highest point in Tang times. If we compare the first chapters of the seventh century Buddhist encyclopaedia *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 with the corresponding sections of the official *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 the two accounts seem hardly to have anything in common, though both profess to describe our own physical universe. We must conclude that here again the alternative world conception was virtually restricted to "pockets" of specialized Buddhist learning without affecting traditional Chinese lore to any significant degree. It is therefore not comparable to the massive introduction of themes taken from pagan antiquity into Christian civilization during the European Rennaissance, because in that case the two traditions had never been quite separated and easily merged into a new synthesis.

If we would try, for the purpose of analysis, to define the various selective mechanisms that were at work in the formation of Chinese Buddhism, the following types could be suggested, together with a summary indication of some examples:

(1) *Total absorption* is a marginal category, because, strictly speaking, it should be reserved for cases in which originally Buddhist elements have been completely digested by the receiving environment, even to such a degree as to lose their Buddhist connotations. As far as the culture of the élite is concerned, one may think of certain concepts of Buddhist origin that have been incorporated into the Neo-Confucian synthesis, or, in the field of social organization, of various latter-day charity and welfare
[410] institutions managed by the Confucian gentry, but going back to Buddhist prototypes. In general, however, examples of total absorption are far more numerous at the popular level: digestion of many originally Buddhist elements in the syncretic pantheon of popular religion and in folk art; the use of the "prosimetric form" (going back to the alternation of prose and *gāthās* in Buddhist scriptures) in oral literature, etc. The same can be observed in architecture, *e.g.*, the pagoda being used to neutralize evil influences in the proto-science of geomantics; other examples are the

ornamental arch (*pailou* 牌樓), the lion-pillar (*huabiao* 華表) and many features of architectural decoration.

(2) *Adoption* of an alien Buddhist element without apparent change in form and character can only play a limited role, if it indeed occurs at all. Even if at first sight an element has retained its original character, it must be remembered that by being integrated in a new cultural context it will always have acquired new connotations. Thus, the simple element of "tonsure" as an outward sign of monkhood may seem to be a case of pure adoption, but in the Chinese context its symbolic content was altered (at least among the opponents of Buddhism) in a negative sense, by its association with bodily punishment, self-mutilation and hence unfilial conduct. The same is true of such apparent cases of "pure adoption" as the vegetarian diet, the chanting of Sanskrit *dhāraṇī*, etc.

(3) *Selection and change of emphasis* may be the most important mechanism, active in the introduction and adaptation of larger complexes. Both the nature of the selected elements and the change of emphasis within the complex are closely related to coexisting patterns of preference in the receiving culture. Two random examples: the selection of the doctrine of universal Emptiness as a focus of interest in the fourth century, with special emphasis on the relation between Being and Non-Being, clearly corresponding to the popularity of mystic "Neo-Daoist" speculations among the cultured élite. Selection of the Mahāyāna doctrine of the possibility of accumulating karmic merit on behalf of other beings, with special emphasis on the ceremonial means to relieve the suffering of *pretas*; obvious connection with traditional practices to appease tormented spirits and with the filial duties towards ancestors.

(4) *Restructuring*: The integration of disparate elements into a new complex can be frequently observed in all sectors and at all levels; it has been illustrated in section III by the way in which different Buddhist elements were combined into the new complex of "legitimation of dynastic rule". The most impressive products of restructuring are the all-inclusive systems based on the principle of *panjiao* 叛教 ("differentiated teaching") of which the Tiantai scheme has become the most outstanding example: attempts at reintegration of all scriptural teachings in an all-embracing system of periodization and methods of preaching, a hierarchical structure leading up to one basic scripture (in the case of Tiantai, the *Lotus sūtra*) as the highest revelation.

(5) *Compartmentalization*: The isolated existence of a Buddhist complex of ideas and practices within the receiving culture, without drastic

changes in form or content and with little or no influence on the outside world. It has been illustrated by some examples above. It seems that the insular situation cannot be maintained indefinitely, and that such elements are eventually rejected, or at best relegated to an absolutely marginal position.

(6) *Hybridization*: A complete merger of Buddhist and "native" notions or practices different from "total absorption" in that in a hybrid the Buddhist characteristic inspiration is maintained throughout. The figure of the "mad monk" in Chinese Buddhism is a good example of complete amalga-
[411] mation of traditional stereotypes (the unconventional Daoist recluse; the idea of "hidden saintliness") and the Mahāyānist notions of *upāyakauśalya* and the rejection of worldly norms and conventions.

(7) *Stimulated development*: The creation of new and original complexes in which Buddhism acted as "trigger mechanism" has been illustrated above by the independent development of internal monastic organization. Many other examples could be cited: economic institutions created by the Buddhist Church in medieval times; the development of Chinese Buddhist historiography and bibliography; the eschatological "subversive" movements based on the idea of the final disappearance of the dharma and the impending arrival of Maitreya, etc. It should be noted that in such cases Buddhism acted as stimulus, but that in all other respects the further development was closely related to basic features in the receiving culture (monastic organization: link with well-developed systems in bureaucracy and large corporate bodies; economic institutions: link with analogous developments in the large landed estates; historiography and other scholarly activities: link with strong secular tradition of scholarship; eschatological movements: traditional ideas about dynastic decline and the change of the Mandate of Heaven).

(8) *Rejection*: Like pure adoption, complete rejection is rarely attested. In some cases we may assume that the absence of certain features was caused by very strong antagonism between a Buddhist element and some basic political or moral assumptions of the receiving culture. Thus, if food-begging by monks, though very often mentioned in translated scriptures and prescribed by the Vinaya rules, was never practised as a regular custom in China, this may have been due to a deep-seated negative attitude towards begging. In the same way, moral considerations, rooted in family ethics and Confucian prudishness, may have eliminated the sexual component from Tantric Buddhism in China.

It should be repeated that the analytical treatment of Chinese Buddhism in terms of cultural interaction and types of response is a somewhat one-sided approach, one that will never be able to supplant other types of description. By its emphasis on environmental aspects it is bound to stress function rather than content. If applied mechanically, it can easily lead to barren determinism, and it deliberately overlooks the influence that great individual minds and personalities may have on the course of events. It may, however, have some use as an instrument for comparative analysis.

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BUDDHIST INFLUENCE ON EARLY DAOISM: A SURVEY OF SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE

1. *Introductory Remarks*

This paper does not pretend to be more than is suggested by its title. It is a preliminary survey and analysis of elements of Buddhist origin found in a selection of about 120 Daoist scriptures that can safely be assumed to be "early," i.e. to date from the period between the Later Han and the early sixth century.[1] The scope of the investigation is therefore clearly limited, and so are the results gained from it. The conclusions should be checked against the data yielded by other sources of information: historical and bibliographical literature, belles-letres, inscriptions and iconographical evidence. Only then a reasonably balanced picture could be drawn of what, after all, appears to be one of the most characteristic developments in medieval Daoism: its absorption of a great number of elements at various levels, ranging from simple terminological loans to doctrinal complexes, from Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism. It should be added that in the present study I only rarely touch upon the "Daoist countercurrent" which actually should receive due attention because it places the subject in its true perspective: what we observe here is no doubt one half of a process of mutual influencing in the course of which Chinese Buddhism absorbed and digested quite a number of Daoist elements.

[85] That the vast majority of Daoist scriptures of the period show signs of Buddhist influence cannot be doubted. Of the 123 texts investigated, no less than 93 showed at least marginal Buddhist influence; the 28 early *Lingbao* 靈寶 texts are all clearly affected by Mahāyāna Buddhism, and

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[1] The analysis is based on a list of titles kindly put at my disposal by my colleagues Schipper and Lagerwey at Paris; as without this supply of raw materials it would have been impossible to make this survey, I may here express my cordial thanks to them. Daoist scriptures will be referred to by DZ followed by their number according to K. M. Schipper, *Concordance du Tao-tsang,* Paris 1975; I have added between brackets the number of the volume in the photolithographic reprint edition of 1924–1926, and a capital letter indicating the Daoist tradition to which the scripture belongs: *T* for 天師; *L* for 靈寶; and *S* for 上清. A list of Daoist scriptures quoted or referred to is appended to this paper. Buddhist texts are referred to by their *Taishō daizōkyō* number, preceded by *T*.

particularly in that tradition we find a number of scriptures in which borrowed terminological, stylistic and conceptual elements reach such proportions that we can almost speak of "Buddho-Daoist hybrids."

The fact itself is not surprising—on the contrary: when we consider that the two great religious traditions both took their rise in the second century CE, and since then developed side by side in the same geographical areas, it would be quite extraordinary if they would not show signs of mutual influence. It does, however, give rise to a number of questions:

(1) What types of borrowing do we find? Are the loans mainly formal, i.e. terminological and stylistic, contributing to the presentation of Daoist ideas in a more diversified, enriched, even "exotic" way, without really affecting the content of the message? Or are they also conceptual, i.e. do they also basically add new elements to the body of Daoist doctrines which by their absorption is altered or even reoriented? Or do the elements borrowed from Buddhism serve to reinforce and stimulate pre-existing Daoist notions without really altering them or adding new ideas and practices?

(2) Since processes of adoption usually imply selection, can we define what element or complexes of elements were selected from the immense corpus of Mahāyāna Buddhism as it gradually became known in the course of this period? Is it a very broad selection, covering the whole spectrum of Buddhist doctrines, monastic discipline, scholasticism, hagiography, morality, devotionalism and worship (to mention a few sectors at random)? Or do we observe a clear concentration of loans in particular sectors, and have vast fields of Buddhist religious life failed to influence Daoism? If so, can we suggest an explanation for the pattern of preference?

(3) Conversely, do we find considerable differences in density in the distribution of Buddhist loans in scriptures belonging to different "sects" or orientations within Daoism? If we find (as we do) that scriptures of the Tianshi 天師 tradition are only marginally affected by Buddhist terminology, whereas the highest concentration (both in number, scope and inten-
[86] sity) is found in the *Lingbao* tradition, can we offer an explanation?

(4) Does a closer study of Buddhist loans enable us to draw conclusions as to the dating of Daoist scriptures? Or, more concretely, are the borrowed elements so specific that they can be related to one source of information: a certain text, or at least a certain translator or school of translators, so that the latter gives us a *terminus post quem*? And if a certain Daoist text does not contain any trace, however marginal, of Buddhist influence does that fact point to an early date?

(5) Lastly, a student of Chinese Buddhism may be allowed to add a final question, at the risk of its being irrelevant in this context: what do the survey and analysis of Buddhist influences in early Daoist literature teach us about Chinese Buddhism itself?

"Influence" and "borrowing" are vague terms that cover a whole range of phenomena, from the most superficial "ornamental" use of a Buddhist term to the incorporation of a whole complex of Buddhist origin. At least for the purpose of analysis we have to distinguish various types or levels of borrowing, even if it is obvious that there are many border cases and that, in principle, even the most formal loans to some extent do affect the content of the message.

The first and most elementary type of loans I would call *formal borrowing:* elements of Buddhist origin that exclusively or mainly contribute to the verbal and stylistic presentation of the message. If we find the common expression *qibao* 七寶 (*saptaratna*) in a Daoist context, it usually occurs in passages describing the gorgeous setting of the revelation or the splendour of a superhuman environment. It is not a meaningless expletive, for the whole series of seven is sometimes enumerated in the right conventional order, just as we find them in Mahāyāna scriptures. But its function is clear: it enriches the description, adds to conventional Daoist religious idiom, and makes the story more overwhelming and therefore—hopefully—more effective. The same may be said of a whole range of stylistic loans such as the imitation of the Buddhist *nidāna*-formula at the beginning of a *sūtra*, the "flash-back" effect of a birth story, the conventional closing formula, the accumulation of superlatives and immense numbers, the "exotic" use of transcribed Sanskrit words taken from Buddhist sources or the free invention of pseudo-Sanskrit names.

The second category I would call *conceptual borrowing.* It is a some-
[87] what more elusive type, because in many cases it is difficult to make out in how far a term denoting a well-defined doctrinal concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism has retained some of its original value in the Daoist context. In some cases contextual analysis may enable us to define the content of a certain term as it functions in its new surroundings: it is quite clear that the original Buddhist concept of "rebirth in remote border areas" (邊境, *pratyanta-janapada*), as opposed to rebirth in "the Central Region" (中國, *madhyadeśa*), has acquired a totally new significance, whereas the concept *san jie* 三界, the Three Spheres of Existence that plays a central and rather complicated role in the Buddhist world-view, appears to be so

hollowed out in Daoist usage that it means little more than "the world of being". In some cases the use of borrowed doctrinal terms is so loose and unspecific that they border upon what I have called "formal loans": does a reference to "the endless, innumerable, countless worlds" really imply an acceptance of the Buddhist panorama of numberless world-systems (*lokadhātu* 世界) floating in the immensity of space, or is it just a figure of speech?

The third category is that of *borrowed complexes*: the absorption of a coherent cluster of ideas and/or practices, taken over from Buddhism as a complex in which at least part of the original constituent elements are maintained, even if the interpretation and function of those elements and of the complex as a whole may be quite different from the original ones. This category comprises subjects like the structure of our world and of the universe (world-systems; the "ten directions" 十方 of space; the earth with its four continents surrounding Mt. Sumeru; the multiplicity of Heavens with their hierarchy of gods, the various Hells with their highly specialized tortures; the cosmic eras and the "*kalpa*-disasters" 劫災 that bring about the periodic destruction of the universe up to a certain level). Another complex is that of karmic retribution, sin, personal guilt, and penitence. It should be pointed out that the difference between this category and the second one, that of "concepts", is mainly one of coherence and complexity. Thus, a concept like *benyuan* 本願 "original vow" (to strive for salvation) clearly belongs to the complex "accumulation of merit" which is closely related to *karman* and retribution, whereas the theme of "the body (of the Adept) producing water and fire" 身出水火 (originally one of the miraculous powers of the Buddhist Saint) only occurs in isolation, without any reference to other distinctive traits of the Buddhist complex, and therefore should be regarded as a conceptual borrowing.

[88] There is a fourth category which is so elusive that at least at this stage of the investigation it is better not to speculate about it: the "pervasive influence" of Buddhist ideas and practices which may have contributed to the development of Daoism without, however, finding its expression in recognizably Buddhist terms. It is very probable that a number of fundamental notions and orientations in Daoism were reinforced or stimulated by analogous (or seemingly analogous) Buddhist ideas, such as the notion of a personal revelation, a certain periodicity not only in the formation and destruction of the universe but also in the preaching of the Dharma; the assumption of an impersonal and inexorable law of retribution yet combined with a personalization of both good and evil; the doctrine of good works and charity; the idea that a holy text may act not only

as a piece of religious instruction but also as an object of worship and as a powerful protective charm; the belief that certain forms of mental concentration or trance may temporarily enable the practicant to visit the higher spheres of existence; certain techniques of visualization (觀) developed in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and many more. At this stage, little more can be said about this with any certainty. In most cases the Buddhist and Daoist ideas supported and stimulated each other, so that for every subject both a Buddhist and a Daoist (or at least an endogenous Chinese) origin could be suggested. I shall not deal with such pervasive influence or convergence, which is at best hard to prove, and limit myself to those cases in which Buddhist influence is made explicit by the use of recognizably Buddhist terminology.

The main part of this study is devoted to a survey of the stylistic and terminological features that form the category of "formal borrowings," and to the "conceptual" borrowings which will be treated in relation to a number of Buddhist technical expressions that frequently figure in our body of Daoist texts. As to the third category, that of complex borrowings, an attempt will be made to define the most important areas of influence and their main features without, however, treating them in detail. There are several reasons for this way of presentation. In the first place, this survey should serve a practical purpose: it is designed to make the student of Daoism acquainted with the main features of Mahāyāna "scriptural style" as far as they are found in early Daoist literature; it should provide him with a body of concrete and easily observable terminological and stylistic phenomena. This part of our findings must therefore be pre-
[89] sented in somewhat more detail. Secondly, in the course of this study it has become clear that the whole subject of complex borrowing is a vast field full of extremely complicated problems, and that an adequate presentation of even one cluster, such as the complex "guilt-sin-penitence-expiation" would swell this article far beyond its intended size.

2. *The Image of Buddhism*

Buddhism is very rarely mentioned in early Daoist scriptures; it is nowhere described at any length in either positive or negative terms. Such a silence is both remarkable and regrettable. Remarkable, because it curiously contrasts with the often massive presence of Buddhist terms and ideas in the text themselves. Regrettable, because our analysis of Buddhist influence would no doubt have gained in depth and coherence if we had

more information about the Daoist perception of its greatest rival. However, the few passages in which Buddhism is treated (ten passages in no more than five texts, belonging to both the *Tianshi* and *Lingbao* traditions), plus some negative evidence from passages in which Buddhism is conspicuously absent, allow us to draw some general conclusions.

To begin with the negative evidence: it is very striking that Buddhism is nowhere explicitly condemned as a heterodox or pernicious system. Nowhere do we find a tone of accusation and contempt such as so often appears in fifth-century Buddhist and Daoist polemical treatises—polemics that, surprisingly, do not appear to have left any traces in early scriptural literature. There are plenty of condemnations, but they only regard manifestations of "heterodox religions": the exorcists 巫 who follow an evil road and therefore have to face the most gruesome punishments in Hell together with their clients;[2] the many kinds of "excessive sacrifices" 淫祀 and other forms of popular cults and magic:

> Those who kill living beings to make their excessive sacrifices; who offer their oblations to shamans and demons; who slander and ridicule Daoists . . . who with covered heads and loose hair look up to heaven and summon the spirits; who detestably utter immoral prayers, wishing thereby to kill other people; or who hold Sun and Moon in contempt and scold the Constellations . . .[3]

[90] Even the most elaborate lists of all possible transgressions and sinful acts or attitudes do not contain the slightest hint at Buddhist beliefs or practices; religious transgressions are mentioned by the dozen, but they either concern misbehaviour within the Daoist community (such as ritual transgressions committed when accepting or transmitting a sacred text, or committing ritual mistakes when fasting), or are clearly directed against popular cults such as mentioned above.[4]

If we now turn to explicit references to Buddhism, the most striking theme, returning again and again, is that Buddhism in various ways is regarded as *complementary* to Daoism: a relation in which Daoism is no doubt seen as superior, but in which Buddhism is not denied a right to exist as a kind of alternative way.

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2 DZ 344 (vol. 177; *L*) p. 13[a].

3 DZ 455 (vol. 202; *L*) p. 7[a].

4 See, for instance, the long lists in DZ 456 (vol. 202; *L*) pp. 22[a]–31[a] and DZ 1367 (vol. 1040; *L*) j. II, pp. 4[b]–7[a]. For the ambivalent attitude of Daoism towards such popular cults, see Rolf A. Stein, "Religious Daoism and Popular Religion", in H. Welch and A. Seidel (eds.), *Facets of Daoism*, New Haven, 1977, pp. 53–82.

Thus we find in a *Lingbao* text with strong Mahāyānist elements a curious passage in which two Perfected 眞人 both authorized by the Heavenly Venerable One 天尊 to preach in the world, apparently do so as representatives of, respectively, Daoism (the "left" way, or Yang) based on a contractual relationship in which the recipient pays for the sacred texts, and of Buddhism (the "right" way, hence Yin) based on almsbegging and free preaching without remuneration. The Perfected One on the Right is expressly told not to accept any "pledge" 信 payment for his instruction, whereas the one on the Left is ordered to conform to the normal Daoist rules regarding remuneration. When asked why he issues such contradictory orders, the Heavenly Venerable One tells the "Daoist" disciple:

> All practitioners 兆 are not the same; their minds are all different. Therefore I open up two ways, but they lead to the same goal 其歸一也. Why is this so? The Arcane Disciple of the Right (one of the two Perfected) is a *śramaṇa* (or?) laic 桑門居士; such a layman will go everywhere begging 普行乞求; he regards the destruction of evil as the (saving) Bridge of the Law 法橋. If there can be (found) people who spend gifts (to the *saṅgha*), then their happy retributions will be a thousandfold. Therefore I let him confer the scriptures (on the believers) without again asking a remuneration. But if
> [91] you now as a Disciple would practice *piṇḍapāta* 分衛 (food-begging) in order to ask for alms and to save people—if they would not give, this would even increase the guilt 罪 of those people. If their faith has no means to express itself, how could they be saved? . . . .[5]

The idea of complementarity, based on the fact that both doctrines have sprung from one source of wisdom, is curiously illustrated by a pseudo-historical story attributed to Ge Xuan 葛玄, here acting as a high official in the hierarchy of Immortals. The text is very clearly inspired by Buddhist *avadāna* stories devoted to the karmic careers of persons in their past lives. After having given a survey of a great number of his past existences, he treats his last lives in somewhat more detail, because the Immortals present have also played a role in them:

> (*Ge Xuan was at that time a ruler who excelled in piety. He and his attendants made a vow in their next life to devote themselves to religion*): "I would be a recluse, Shi Daowei 釋道微 and Zhu Falan 竺法蘭 vowed to become *śramaṇas*

[5] DZ 325 (vol. 167; *L*) pp. 17^b–18^a. That "practitioner" is the meaning of the word *zhao* 兆 as it occurs very regularly in Daoist scriptures is made abundantly clear by the context. I have been unable to find an explanation of this remarkable use of *zhao*, which does not figure in any lexicon. Does the practitioner identify himself with the "omen", i.e. with the promise of a fortunate situation that the rite is expected to realize?

> 沙門, and Zheng Siyuan 鄭思遠 and Zhang Tai 張泰 would be Daoists 道士; we would have the universal aspiration to rise up and become Immortals, and to transcend the (worldly) affairs of government. At my death I straightway rose up to the Heavenly Hall, where I obtained clothing and food from the divine kitchens. Then I was born as a recluse, (Zhu Fa)lan and (Shi Dao)wei became *śramaṇas*, and (Zhang) Tai and Zheng (Siyuan) became Daoists. Together we entered (religious life) to study the Way and to seek Immortality. Later I acted as a teacher for those men, and we aspired for the practice of Mahāyāna 大乘行." (*After a description of his Daoist career, Ge Xuan continues*): "the karmic factors of causation 因緣 had not yet been exhausted when I passed away into the Great Yin—then we were born in distinguished households, and we again became Daoists and *śramaṇas*. Together we again devoted ourselves to (religious) study in a teacher-disciple relation. Again I received the great scriptures; I observed the rules of fasting and practiced the Way . . . At that time (Zhu Fa)lan, (Shi Dao)wei, (Zhang) Tai and Zheng (Siyuan) all attended on me. That we today are (again) in each other's company is the result of our karmic vow made in a former life".[6]

This tradition which associates Ge Xuan with the two monks is echoed by another *Lingbao* text:

[92] The Taiji zuo xiangong 太極左仙公 Ge Xuan . . . on Mt. Tiantai instructed his disciple Zheng Siyuan, the *śramaṇas* Zhu Falan and Shi Daowei, and the first ruler at the time of the Wu (kingdom), Sun Quan.[7]

Of course the story is quite apocryphal as it contains several glaring anachronisms. Zhu Falan is well-known, according to an equally unreliable tradition, as one of the two apostles of Buddhism in China: it was he who is said to have come to China together with Kāśyapa Mātaṅga, at the invitation of the Han messengers who were sent out around 65 CE by Emperor Ming after the latter had had his famous dream. His name is therefore intimately connected with the whole apocryphal story of the so-called translation of the *Sūtra in 42 sections* 四十二章經 which we do not need to go into here.[8]

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6 DZ 1115 (vol. 352; *L*) p. 5^{a-b}.

7 DZ 1429 (vol. 1059; *L*) p. 10^{a}. The expression 吳時先主孫權 is unusual; the text may be corrupted. Normally one would expect these words to be the beginning of a new phrase: "At the time of Wu, the first ruler Sun Quan . . .".

8 It is not clear whether Zhu Falan's role as a disciple of the famous Daoist master is somehow associated with the well-known but still puzzling inclusion of a Daoist version of the *Sūtra in Forty-two Chapters* in the *Zhengao*. There is, however, a slight chance that these Daoist texts do not refer to the famous (if probably legendary) Zhu Falan of the first century CE, but to an obscure namesake who is mentioned very incidentally in the biography of the third century translator Zhi Qian who, indeed, was active in the Lower

Another mystery is the identity of the monk Shi Daowei, who is unknown from elsewhere. The form of the name itself is, however, an interesting detail because it provides us with a reliable *terminus post quem*. The clerical surname Shi 釋 (Śākya) is known to have been introduced by Dao'an 道安 around 370 CE,[9] and this innovation was so succesful that after one generation the older "ethnic" clerical surnames such as Zhu 竺 and Zhi 支 were superseded by *Shi*. The text therefore must be dated around 400 CE at the earliest. It is almost incredible that even after more than two centuries of Buddhism in China, and at least one century after it started to penetrate in gentry circles in the Jiankang area, such fantastic notions
[93] about one of the founding fathers of Chinese Buddhism were still current among the highly cultured public for which this text (and, to judge from their sophisticated language, all other *Lingbao* scriptures) was intended. But that aspect does not concern us here. Most important to note is that (a) here again two representatives of Buddhism are mentioned in a rather appreciative way, in any case without the slightest tinge of condemnation or ridicule, and (b) this text again suggests a certain complementarity: both *śramaṇas* and Daoists were disciples of the great Ge Xuan—they only chose "another Way".

As we should expect, most information—if we may call it that—about Buddhism in our Daoist scriptures is directly related to the *huahu* 化胡 theory. Here, too, the theme of complementarity—two alternative methods established by the same Sage—is stressed, but the relation is expressed in other terms: since Buddhism is *Yin*, and therefore associated with both submission and death, it was originally adapted to the nature and customs of barbarians, who (at least according to one episode in this composite story) were forced to accept it by magic intimidation.

The most extensive text, found in the *Tianshi* scripture *Santian neijie jing* 三天內解經, is well-known: it consists of a conflation of at least three different traditions about the origin of Buddhism, so that that religion actually appears to have been created or revealed three times: once in highest antiquity at the time of Fu Xi 伏羲 and Nü Wa 女媧; once again by Laozi in his next *avatāra* under the Chou, m Kashmir; and finally in India, by an *avatāra* of Laozi's disciple and companion Yin Xi. The most essential passages in this extremely confused story are the following:

Yangtze area (*CSZJJ* 97.3; not mentioned in Zhi Qian's biography in *Gaoseng zhuan*; cf. my *Buddhist Conquest* pp. 49–50).

[9] Dao'an assumed the clerical surname *Shi* when he stayed at Xiangyang, i.e. between 365 and 379 CE; cf. *Buddhist Conquest* p. 189.

(1) (At the time of Fu Xi, Laozi) "then produced the Three Ways 三道 to instruct the gods and the people. In China, the *Yang* fluid is pure and correct, so he let (the people there) observe the great Way of Non-action 無爲大道. In the sixty-one regions of the outer barbarians the *Yin* fluid is strong and exuberant, so he let them observe the Way of the Buddha 佛道 with its very severe prohibitive rules, in order to suppress the *Yin* fluid. In Chu and Yue the fluids of both *Yin* and *Yang* are weak, so he let them observe the Great Way of Purity and Moderation 清約大道. At that time the orderly rule of the Six Heavens flourished, and the Three Ways were practiced".[10]

[94] (2) (After a second birth, this time from an apparitional mother created by Laozi himself, and after living through the second half of the Yin and the first half of the Zhou, Laozi, disgusted at the degeneration of Zhou, went to the West accompanied by Yin Xi): "Seeing that the Western Hu were stubborn and hard to convert, he and Yin Xi together went (further) westward and entered the country of Jibin 罽賓 (Kashmir). He miraculously changed himself into the great man Mijia 彌加大人 and (so) converted and subdued the King of the Hu; for him he made Buddhist scriptures (totalling) six thousand and forty thousand words (? 六千四萬言), and the king with his whole country revered and served him. This country lies at a distance of 40.000 *li* from the country of Han. When the whole territory of Jibin submissively followed the Great Doctrine 大法, Laozi again went westward and entered the country of Tianzhu 天竺 (India), which again lies at a distance of 40.000 *li* from Jibin. The king of that country had a concubine named Qingmiao 清妙. When she was sleeping in the day-time, Laozi ordered Yin Xi to ride a white elephant, and then to transform himself into an oriole that flew into Qingmiao's mouth; it had the appearance of a meteor. The next year, on the 8th day of the 4th month, (Yin Xi), splitting open her right side, was born. When he fell on the ground, he walked seven steps, raised his right hand, pointed to the heavens, and said: "In the Heavens above and on earth below, only I am venerable; The Three Spheres are all (full of)

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10 DZ 1205 (vol. 867; *T*) j. I, p. 3[a]. In DZ 789 (vol. 563; *T*) p. 13[b] we find what seems to be a more detailed account of Laozi's severity towards the barbarians, his manifestation as the mysterious "Great Man", and the latter's big magic by means of which he forced the Hu to accept the doctrine: "Laozi's then went westward among the Hu, and he gave them the Doctrine of the Way. His prohibitions were very severe: they were not (allowed to) have the dispensation of *yin* and *yang* (陰陽之施, i.e. sexual intercourse), nor were they to kill living beings for their drink and food 飲食: probably wrong for 飲酒 so the Hu were unable to believe in the Way. He then transformed himself into a Perfected Immortal 眞仙, and (this) Immortal, mixing with the gods (?), floated freely amidst the blue clouds, and . . . whirled around on the bank of the Weak Water (the meaningless 故 before 翔 is obviously corrupt in view of the parallelism with 浮遊 in the preceding phrase). The Hu people kowtowed several myriads of times, and the Perfected One . . . (鏡照天 does not make sense to me in this context); they shaved their heads and cut their beards, and vowed to have faith in the Perfected Man. Thereupon the True Way started to flourish . . . ".

For the successive births or transformations of Laozi as described in the *Santian neijie jing* and the *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiao jiekejing* 正一法文天師教戒科經 see Anna Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao-tseu dans le Taoisme des Han*, Paris, 1969, esp. pp. 79–84.

> suffering; what is there enjoyable in them?" After having been born (into this world) he strenuously exerted himself, and then was (endowed with) the body of a Buddha. Then the Way of the Buddha started flourishing again (i.e. for the second time, after its first revelation under Fu Xi).[11]

[95] The text goes on to describe the moral degeneration which in Later Han times was aggravated by the introduction of Buddhism under Emperor Ming, leading to a situation in which "the Three Ways became mixed up together, so that the people were confused and disorderly, and Chinese and foreign (religious) were mingled." Therefore Laozi revealed a new doctrine to Zhang Daoling in order to abolish the "Three Ways of the Six Heavens" 罷廢六天三道.

To this point, Buddhism is represented as absolutely inferior and dispensable. However, in a following passage the idea of complementarity of *Yin* and *Yang* and the theme of the two Ways springing from a single fountainhead of wisdom are again stressed:

> For the Three Ways are different branches springing from one trunk; ... they all are doctrines of the Highest Laojun, and although their teachings are not the same, their general purport is (rooted) in the True Way 大歸於眞道. Laojun emphasizes the transformation of life 生化, whereas Śākya(muni) emphasizes the transformation of death 死化. That is why Laozi was born by splitting open the left armpit, for he emphasizes the left which is the *Yang*-fluid; (hence) he emphasizes the Record of Life in the Blue Palace 青宮生錄. Śākya(muni) was born by splitting open the right armpit, for he emphasizes the right which is the *Yin*-fluid; (hence) he emphasizes the Record of Death of the Black Registers 黑簿死錄. Therefore the teachings of Laozi and Śākya(muni) have different methods of left and right (respectively). The Transformation of the Left follows the life-fluid of the Palace of the Left, so that the body rises up to become a flying Immortal; the Transformation of the Right follows the death-fluid, so that one is annihilated 滅度 to be born again. The (monks') religious garments are all black, (for the Buddha)

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[11] *Ib.*, j. I, pp. 3^b–4^a. I shall not go into details of this confusing story. The account of two births of Laozi (not translated here: one from his cosmic mother Xuanmiao 玄妙玉女 in primeval times, and once from a self-created mother at the time of Fu Xi) contains only two recognizable Buddhist traits: the fact that he preached a *sūtra* when dwelling in the womb, and his unusual birth, both times from his mother's left arm-pit.

The story of Yin Xi's entrance into Qingmiao's body, his birth from her right side, and his first words are undoubtedly based upon an extremely popular account of the Buddha's youth, quest for Enlightenment and first preaching, the *Taizi ruiying benqi jing* 太子瑞應本起經 (T 185), compiled from three Late Han scriptures and one or two unknown sources by (Zhi Qian 支謙, probably at Jianye, between 220 and 250 CE Qingmiao 清妙 is probably an expanded form of Miao 妙 which stands for Māyā, the name of Siddhārtha Gautama's mother in T 185 as well as in Dharmarakṣa's late third century translation of the *Lalitavistara, Puyao jing* 普曜經, T. 186, p. 486b.

> made them wear black clothes in order to imitate the *Yin*-fluid: they are entered into the Black Register. The Highest One created the teaching methods of these Three Ways; although they are different paths, yet in the end they stem from the Perfection of the Way, and (as such) they are not different 雖殊途終歸於道眞無有異也. One can only say that man has obtained the primordial fluid to be able to perfect his body, and that it is naturally difficult for him then again to be subjected to destruction, to undergo the *Yin*-transformation, and to go round in the cycle (of rebirths). So although
> [96] the Transformation of the Right (= Buddhism) is not as swift and easy as the (method of) the Palace of the Left (= Daoism), yet it is also a good thing to return to Perfection through the cycle of rebirths 輪轉歸眞亦爲善事! The reason why I say that Right is not as good as Left is because according to the scripture the Perfect Way loves life and hates death; longevity is the Way, and death and destruction are not. Therefore it is better to be a live mouse than a dead king![12]

Apart from the ideas of complementarity and shared origin, we find here another distinction made between the two religions (or "methods," 法): Daoism is relatively easy, for by nourishing one's vital forces in the body one gains so to speak a direct way to paradise, whereas Buddhism is cumbersome, roundabout, for final release is only won after an inmense detour through innumerable lives. Of course this is a complete misunderstanding of the essential message of Buddhism, the inexorable law of *karman* and rebirth: *Saṃsāra* is the inescapable condition of existence itself, not an option! Here we touch perhaps the deepest reason why Buddhism, in this distorted image, is treated as a somewhat inferior but not unreasonable alternative. For the authors of the passages quoted above Buddhism was not a religious system claiming absolute truth, but, *more Sinico*, a method, a "technique". And against this background we can understand why in another passage of the same scripture the difference between Buddhism and Daoism is not described in terms of religious dogma or metaphysics, but by pointing to some contrasting techniques of auto-hypnosis and mental concentration:

> Now a Buddhist monk 沙門道人 who is a student of the Small Vehicle will sit quietly 靜坐 and count his own breaths (自數其氣, referring to *ānāpāna* practice in meditation); when he has completed (a series of) ten he starts again, for years and years, and he never forgets to do it even for a moment. For Buddhism does not let people concentrate on the spirits in the body 存思身神; therefore they devote themselves to the work of counting their breaths in order to cut off external thoughts. The Daoist who studies the Great Vehicle

12 *Ib.*, j. I, pp. 9^b–10^a.

> always meditates on the Perfect spirits inside his body, their bodily forms, the colours of their garments, their *daoyin* 導引 (movements), (their) coming and going, as if he were facing the spiritual lords; as he does not interrupt this even for one moment, external thoughts will not enter. . . .[13]

[97] ### 3. *Stylistic and Terminological Borrowings*

For anyone familiar with Chinese Buddhist literature features of this kind are easily recognizable in Daoist scriptures, for they belong to a very characteristic Chinese Buddhist "scriptural style" which had already developed most of its distinctive idiom as early as the third century CE. It was the results of a process of absorption and sinicization of Indian prototypes, in the course of which generations of "translation teams" (foreign masters and their Chinese assistants) gradually had been able to coin a huge mass of standard equivalents for typically Buddhist stylistic features, metaphors, proper names and technical terms. The early development of this Chinese Buddhist "translationese" is a vast and neglected subject; here I can only present a few general remarks by way of introduction.

In the period covered here (Later Han to early sixth century) roughly three phases can be distinguished: the period of "primitive" translations (from the middle of the second century to ca. 220 CE), that of the "archaic" translations (from the end of the Han to ca. 390 CE), and the phase of "early" versions initiated by the great translator Kumarājīva. The period of the "new" versions, characterized by a completely new and very technical translation idiom that was introduced in the early Tang falls outside the scope of this paper.

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[13] DZ 1205 (vol. 876; *T*) j. II, p. 4[b]. It is difficult to make out whether 沙門道人學小乘者 should be taken to mean "a Buddhist monk who (belongs to the particular type of monks who) study the Small Vehicle" (implying that other Buddhist monks devote themselves to the Mahāyāna), or "a Buddhist monk who (as all Buddhist monks do) studies the Small Vehicle" (implying that Daoism is here regarded as the true Great Vehicle, and that the whole of Buddhism forms the Small Vehicle). For the use of the terms 小乘 and 大乘 in a Daoist context, see below, pp. 44–45; cf. also Rolf A. Stein, op. cit., p. 63. The argument that Buddhism is *yin*, and therefore associated with death is well-known from Daoist anti-Buddhist polemic literature. As I have shown elsewhere (*Buddhist Conquest,* pp. 305–307) it figured already in the original *Huahu jing* composed about 300 CE by the Daoist master Wang Fu 王浮, *alias* Ji Gongci 基公次. The title of that original version, *Mingwei huahu jing* 明威化胡經, specifically attaches it to the early *Tianshi* tradition, as *mingwei* 明威 no doubt stands for the "sworn alliance" 盟威 concluded between the gods and Zhang Daolin in 142 CE, according to the *Zhengyi fawen tianshi jiao jiekejing* (DZ 789 p. 14[a]).

The Late Han was a period of stylistic and terminological experimentation. The ca. 30 genuine Han versions that have been preserved[14] show a great variety of approaches and solutions:

[98] different ways of rendering technical expressions, of including or excluding vulgarisms, of maintaining or avoiding the cumbersome and unintelligible transcription of Sanskrit words. By the end of the Han these different schools had merged into a rather conventionalized idiom which conformed to the moderate aims set by the Buddhist community in those early days—the production of very free but understandable versions of Buddhist scriptures. The medium failed completely as soon as the arcana of Indian Buddhist scholasticism with its very rich and sophisticated vocabulary had to be rendered in Chinese.

The period of "archaic" translations is characterized by two main streams: the versions produced in the Lower Yangzi area (Wu, mainly Jianye) and the translations made by Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 and his school in North and Northwest China. Together they cover the third and the beginning of the fourth century. Both are based on the semi-literary syncretic translation style of the end of the Han, but with some marked differences. In the translations of Wu (ca. 220–250) there is a clear tendency to "polish" the Chinese versions by the use of *wenyan* elements and conventions of Chinese literary style, exhibited in a great number of short *sūtras* and narrative stories of the *jātaka* and *avadāna* type—in other words, a kind of "easy to read," entertaining religious literature suited to the taste of a cultured public. This agrees with the information from historical sources which indicates that at that time Buddhism had some influence in court circles. In the North we find a continuation of the late Han idiom with less "polishing"; there is, however, a gradual increase in the use of classical features in the second generation (early 4th century).

The period of "early" versions starts with the introduction of the great scholastic and disciplinary compilations in the late fourth century, which led to the development of a more accurate translation idiom and an enormous production of Chinese technical terms. This reached its climax of activity and creativity after the arrival of Kumārajīva in Chang'an (402 CE)

[14] T 13, 14, 31, 32, 36, 48, 57, 98, 105, 109, 112, 150, 184, 196, 224, 280, 322, 343, 350, 418 (Korean recension only), 458, 602, 603, 605, 607, 624, 626, 792, 807, 1508. Cf. my "Late Han Vernacular Elements in the Earliest Buddhist Translations", *Journal of the Chinese language Teachers Association* 12, 1977, pp. 177–203. A more detailed study on these texts will be published in *T'oung Pao* under the title "A new Approach to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations".

and the setting up of a veritable "translation project" which in the late fourth and early fifth century turned out a mass of translations of unprecedented quality. [99] In close collaboration with his dozens of highly cultured Chinese assistants, Kumārajīva created a very fluent, eminently readable, and yet reasonably accurate translation idiom which, together with its hundreds of new Chinese readings of Sanskrit terms, was soon taken over by subsequent translators.

For our subject we can confine ourselves to Buddhist Mahāyāna *sūtras*, which seems to be the only category of Buddhist literature that has influenced the Daoist scriptures as far as style and terminology are concerned. For the purpose of description we may distinguish three types of borrowings:

(a) stylistic features affecting the form of the scripture as a whole;
(b) the use of idiomatic expressions;
(c) the influence of transcribed Sanskrit terms and proper names.

(a) *Stylistic features* characteristic of the form of Mahāyāna *sūtras* derive from the general structure and conventions found in both the Indian prototypes and the Chinese versions. The most prominent elements are the following:

– A very stereotyped opening formula, in which a speaker (actually the disciple Ānanda as transmitter of the text) declares "Thus I have heard" (聞如是, *evaṃ mayā śrūtam*; in the early fifth century supplanted by 如是我聞);[15] he goes on to indicate the exact place of action ("at a certain time, at a certain occasion, the Lord stayed in the county of *x*, at *y*, in the *z vihāra*"), and the size and composition of the audience. This is the formula describing the "occasion" (*nidāna*). It is balanced, at the end of the sūtra, by a closing formula stating that the audience, after

[15] The change seems trivial, but it actually is an extremely valuable stylistic landmark for dating Buddhist translations. Till the end of the fourth century the translators exclusively used the 聞如是 formula. The phrase 如是我聞 appears for the first time occasionally in the works of translators who were active in Chang'an under the Former Qin, in the last quarter of the fourth century (T 1, 384, 385). Shortly afterwards Kumārajīva, who arrived in Chang'an around 402, exclusively used the 如是我聞 formula in his numerous and extremely influential translations, and it was no doubt due to his example that the use of that rendering became general in the next few decades, both in the south (Faxian, Buddhabhadra, Nandin, Dharmamitra) and in the north (Dharmakṣema). Around the middle of the fifth century, the old formula had virtually become obsolete; the last translators who used it were Guṇabhadra and the *upāsaka* Juqu Jingsheng 沮渠京聲, both active in the Lower Yangzi area under the Liu-Song dynasty.

[100] having listened to the sermon "rejoiced at the words of the Lord, and, having paid obeisance, went their ways".[16]

- In Mahayana *sūtras* the audience reaches gigantic proportions, and, unlike the listeners in Hīnayāna scriptures who generally only consist of a moderate number of monks and some laics, it comprises immense numbers of bodhisattvas, gods of all classes, several kinds of supernatural beings, kings and religious leaders.
- Very often the sermon is "solicited" by a person from the audience, who asks a specific question of a doctrinal nature, or simply wants to hear a sermon, or asks for the explanation of miraculous signs that introduce the actual preaching, notably a ray of light emanating from the Buddha; it pervades and illuminates the whole universe and returns to the top of his head; the world is temporarily transformed into a kind of paradise, and the sufferings of all beings of the "three evil destinations" 三途 are suspended.
- The rest of the sermon generally takes the form of a dialogue; in most cases the dialogue is "socratic", since the person addressed confines himself to remarks like "so it is, Lord," or to an occasional request for further elucidation, or to words of praise.
- The main text is full of embellishing features: miraculous happenings of all kinds described in absolutely standardized formulas, the use of extreme numbers, the accumulation of epitheta, and the arrival of new groups of illustrious persons (bodhisattvas or gods). The sermon is often enlivened by digressions and inserted passages such as parables or "flash-back" birth stories (*jātaka, avadāna*).
- Many *sūtras* contain versified portions (*gāthās* 偈). In a prose context these verses often render direct speech, being introduced by such formulas as "and then, speaking in *gāthās*, he said . . .". But the *gāthā* portions may also be descriptive, or even contain a versified dialogue. *Gāthās* are always unrhymed, both in the Indian original and in Chinese translations.
- Many texts contain excessive words of praise (uttered either by the
[101] preacher himself or by the audience) about the immense qualities and beneficial effects of the *sūtra* itself, and at the end it is often "entrusted" to a certain person.

[16] The closing formula never became as standardized in Chinese translations as the opening phrase eventually became. In early (pre-5th century) Chinese scriptures we find no less than 48 different renderings, ranging from a laconic 佛說經已, 皆大歡喜 (T 109; Han) to a very explicit 佛說如是, 諸比丘聞, 莫不歡喜, 作禮而去 (T 108; W. Jin).

– After hearing the sermon, it often happens that a number of people undergoes its effects immediately: they obtain the "pure eye of the Dharma", or acquire one of the standard stages of Saintliness.

At the level of general stylistic features such as those listed above, the Daoist scriptures show many signs of Buddhist influence, notably in the *Lingbao* tradition. Even there, however, we do not find extreme cases of imitation such as can be found in later Daoist literature. A few *Lingbao* texts exhibit a whole range of *sūtra* features, but apparently the Nanbei-chao period did not yet produce real pseudo-Buddhist *pastiches*.[17] Another (somewhat disappointing) observation is that the influence of the Buddhist scriptural style appears to have been global, not specific—it is only very rarely possible to relate the terminology of a Daoist text to one specific *sūtra*.

The *nidāna*-formula is never taken over as a whole; there is no Daoist equivalent of 如是我聞, but this omission is quite understandable, since we are dealing with direct revelation and not, as in Buddhist lore, with Ānanda "reporting" the Buddha's words after the latter's *nirvāṇa.* The formula "At that time . . .", *ershi* 爾時, so well-known from later Buddho-Daoist hybrids, occurs only once in this body of early texts.[18] But in many cases the other introductory elements are there. There is the very detailed localization, in Daoist scriptures (no doubt under the influence of Chinese bureaucratic practice) enriched by a "dating" of extreme precision: "On the first day of the seventh month of the first year of the Kaihuang era, at noon, the Heavenly Worthy of Primordial Beginning resided in the county of Xinayu 西那玉, in the Yucha 鬱察 Mountains, on the Fuluo 浮羅 Peak, in the Changsang 長桑 Grove . . .".[19] It is sometimes followed by the Daoist version of a well-known Buddhist cliché: the Lord's smile, followed or accompanied by
[102] a multicoloured ray of light that illuminates the whole universe and indicates that an important truth will be revealed, and also the list of miraculous signs and happenings is clearly derived from Buddhist examples.[20]

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[17] The scripture that comes nearest to it is DZ 23 (vol. 26).

[18] DZ 352 (vol. 178; *L*), p. 1[a]. The introductory 爾時 is not confined to Buddho-Daoist hybrids. It also occurs as the opening words in some twenty-five Buddhist translations in which it, for unknown reasons, replaces the regular *nidāna* formula. The cases are evenly spread over the whole period in which translation activities were undertaken, from the third to the early twelfth century.

[19] DZ 177 (vol. 77; *L*), p. 1[a].

[20] Smile and ray of light: DZ 23 (vol. 26; *L*), p. 1[b]; in the Daoist version, the sacred text is sometimes said to appear in this cosmic light—an interesting addition to the Buddhist

The long and exuberant enumeration of the supernatural audience is often there, and we regularly find the "interrogator" coming forward to pray for a revelation,[21] as well as the arrival, at an important point in the middle of the revelation, of a new group of auditors from the "innumerable worlds of the ten directions (of space)" 十方無極世界[22]—in short, in Mahāyānistic hyperbolic idiom, the "innumerable multitudes of infinite, countless species of Utmost Perfected and Great Spiritual Beings".[23] In the same way, a number of *Lingbao* scriptures contain at the end an imitation of the stereotyped closing formula of a *sūtra*, stating that all present were filled with gratitude, payed obeisance and retired.[24]

Occasionally we find—again: exclusively in the *Lingbao* tradition—the insertion of moralistic tales clearly patterned after the Buddhist birth stories; their main function (apart from enlivening the narrative) is to illustrate the working of *karman* in a simple and attractive way. I can here only summarize the content of some interesting examples. Sometimes the preacher will give a long survey of his past "karmic career" covering
[103] dozens of lives, in which in every new existence the sins or noble deeds of the preceding life are punished or rewarded, culminating, of course, in his final apotheosis.[25] One or two lives may be treated in detail, resulting in a miniature *avadāna*, like Ge Xuan's account of his frustrating experience with an unwilling disciple under Yao, and of his last three lives in which, as we have seen (above, pp. 91–92), two Buddhist priests played an important role.[26] A complete birth-story which in all essentials agrees with the Buddhist pattern is found in another *Lingbao* text: the long story of the pious Yue Jingxin 樂淨信 and his son and daughter-in-law—a

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cliché: DZ 1407 (vol. 1051; *L*), p. 2a; T 1411 (vol. 1052; *L*), p. 1a. Lists of miracles, strongly reminiscent of the series of 36 that appear at the moment of the Buddha's birth, in T 1 (vol. 1; *L*) j. I, p. 1a–b; T 22 (vol. 26; *L*) j. I, pp. 2b–4b: several characteristic Buddhist traits such as the earth becoming flat and translucent; the typically Chinese division of the 36 miraculous signs into 12 heavenly *rui* 瑞 and 24 earthly *ying* 應 has no Buddhist origin, but the terms themselves are combined in the title of T 185 太子瑞應本起經 that probably stood model for it.

21 DZ 97 (vol. 49; *L*) j. III, p. 1^{a}; DZ 23 (vol. 26; *L*), p. 1^{a}; DZ 1 (vol. 1; *L*) j. I, p. 1^{a}; DZ 318 (vol. 165; *L*), p. 5^{a}; DZ 1411 (vol. 1052; *L*), p. 1^{a}; DZ 1347 (vol. 1033; *S*), p. 1^{a}.

22 DZ 23 (vol. 26; *L*), p. 2^{b}.

23 T 1 (vol. 1; *L*); j. I, p. 2a.

24 E.g. DZ 97 (vol. 49; *L*), p. 7^{a}: 四衆 (*catuḥpariṣad*, the "four groups" of the religious community) 同時俱起, 作禮稽首受命; DZ 23 (vol. 26; *L*), p. 17^{b} (all who were present)—時稽首, 受命而去; DZ 369 (vol. 181; *L*), p. 19^{a}: 於是四衆同時稽首, 伏地, 稱善而退; DZ 177 (vol. 77; *L*), p. 16^{b}: 是時諸天莫不欣喜, 善哉善哉.

25 DZ 97 (vol. 49; *L*) j. IV, pp. 21^{b}–23^{b}; DZ 1115 (vol. 352; *L*), pp. 3^{b}–5^{a}.

26 DZ 1115 (vol. 352; *L*), p. 2^{a}; *ib.*, p. 5^{a}.

glorification of liberality 施 *dāna*) in its most extreme form, including the willingness to give away one's own children.[27] It also contains the conventional *dénouement* in which the narrator after the conclusion of his story reveals to some persons from his audience that they themselves are the ones who, many *kalpas* ago, were the main actors in the drama that has just been told. Even closer is the correspondence between the Buddhist *avadāna* and the touching story of the pious girl Aqiuzeng 阿丘曾, who vowed to have her body changed into that of a man (a well-known Buddhist theme).[28] Māra, afraid that she will escape from his kingdom, tries to seduce her with Confucian arguments: her body having been produced by her father, any attempt to change it would imply a lack of filial piety. But she remains firm and tells Māra that her female body is not the product of the parents but of her past sins. Finally the girl lights a pyre on an altar and throws herself into it (a clear case of *ātmatyāga* 遺身 or religious self-immolation), but at that very moment she assumes a male body and appears before the Dao. At that point the story is rounded off by a veritable *vyākaraṇa* 授記, a prophecy of future Buddhahood, in Daoist
[104] garb: the Dao declares that this girl (*sic*!) has already adored the *Lingbao* scriptures during 10.000 *kalpas*; she will now be reborn on earth, and after 99.000 kalpas she will reach the state of a Perfected One.[29] Many other pieces of ornamental and illustrative lore derived from Buddhist prototypes could be mentioned, such as the theme of the sailors setting out to gather precious stones from the ocean,[30] or the equally well-known scene in which the Buddha, or in this case the Yuanshi tianzun 元始天尊, manipulates space so that huge crowds can take place in a very small room (here: inside a hollow pearl).[31] An interesting transposition is found

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27 DZ 325 (vol. 167; *L*), p. 3^{a}. The theme of giving away one's children as the highest perfection of Liberality had become well-known in China through Jātaka literature since the third century, and especially through the famous story of Prince Sudāna (in the Pāli version known as Vessantara, *Jātaka* no. 547), a Chinese version of which was included in Kang Senghui's third century *Liudu jijing* 六度集經 (T 152 no. 14, T 152 pp. 7b–11a; Éd. Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et apologues*, vol. I, p. 57) and as a separate scripture translated around 400 by Shengjian 聖堅 (T 172 *Taizi Xudana jing* 太子須大拏經; Chavannes, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 362–395 and vol. IV, pp. 247–248).

28 For the theme of "change of sex" (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*) see Ét. Lamotte, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti* (Louvain 1962), pp. 280–281, note 37.

29 DZ 332 (vol. 167; *L*) j. II, pp. 1^{b}–3^{a}.

30 DZ 325 (vol. 167; *L*), p. 3^{a}.

31 T 1 (vol. 2, *L*) j. I, pp. 2b–3a. For the power of manipulating space as one of the psychic faculties acquired as a by-product of the four *dhyāna* stages see *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 T 1509, j. 6, p. 105a; trsl. Ét. Lamotte, *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse*, vol. I, Louvain 1944, pp. 382–383 and note 2. *ib.*

in the striking illustration of the length of a kalpa, viz. the time needed for a huge mountain to be completely worn away if it is wiped with a soft tissue by a man passing by once in a century—a well-known Buddhist *cliché*; in the Daoist version the mountain has become Kunlun, and "silk gauze" 羅 has taken the place of the fine cloth of Benares.[32]

Of course versified portions occur in the majority of Daoist scriptures, and there are clear signs that the Buddhist "prosimetric style" with its alternation of prose and *gāthās* did contribute to the style and content of the stanzas as we find them in some Daoist texts; they are sometimes even explicitly called "*gāthās*" 偈.[33] However, there is every reason to suppose that Daoist verse, particularly of the "cryptic" and mnemonic type (such as those of the *Huangting wai yujing* 黃庭外玉經) are not derived from any Buddhist model. The earliest attempts of translators to render Buddhist *gāthās* in Chinese *un*rhymed verse (a feature unknown in early Daoist scriptures) can be dated around 180 CE; they are found in the translations
[105] made by Lokakṣema 支婁迦讖.[34] It is unknown whether the practice of writing such lines of four, five or seven syllables to render the complicated patterns of Indian metre was a free invention or a borrowing from an unknown Chinese tradition. Two of Lokakṣema's Chinese collaborators are known to have been patrons of some obscure local cult,[35] and it would be tantalizing to suppose that through them some form of popular incantation may at least have contributed to the Chinese Buddhist prosimetric style. But that is mere speculation. In any case even in the earliest texts Daoist stanzas basically differ from Chinese Buddhist *gāthās*: they always rhyme, and they never include narrative passages, as *gāthās* quite

32 DZ 532 (vol. 295; *L*), p. 19[a]. For this metaphor see e.g. T 99, *Samyuktāgama* 雜阿含, p. 242c and (id.) T 100, p. 487c (= *Saṃyutta Nikāya* II p. 181, *Pabbatasutta*); T 125 *Ekottarāgama* 增一阿含, p. 825c.

33 E.g. DZ 347 (vol. 177; *L*), p. 6[a].

34 In the very first phase (translations made by An Shigao 安世高, ca. 150–170 CE) the translators seem to have been at loss what to do with the *gāthās*. The introductory stanzas of the *Daodi jing* 道地經 (T 607, *Yogācārabhūmi*) have been rendered in clumsy prose, and in several other texts of this pioneer the words "the following is said in *gāthās*" are followed, somewhat paradoxically, by a passage in prose. Only seven translations out of the many attributed to Lokakṣema can be regarded as authentic: T 224, 280, 343, 418 (Korean version), 458, 626, 807.

35 Meng Fu 孟福 and Guo Zhi 郭稚, mentioned as participants in two local cults in, respectively, the lateral text of the 三公碑 of 181 CE (reproduced in Lu Zengxiang 陸增祥, *Baqiongshi jinshi buzheng* 八瓊室金石補正 p. 526[a] and 32[b]) and in the reverse text of the 白石神君碑 of 183 CE (reproduced in *Lianghan jinshi ji* 兩漢金石記 by Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 j. 11, p. 16[a]). The discovery was already made by Tang Yongtong (湯用彤, 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史. 1938, pp. 69–70).

often do. The Buddhist parallel has no doubt influenced and enriched the *répertoire* of Daoist verse, but it certainly did not give birth to it.

The same must be said about the many passages extolling the excellence and supernatural qualities of a certain scripture, its antiquity, its sacred origin, etc. which is one of the most common elements in Daoist religious literature. It is true that Mahāyāna scriptures regularly make the most fantastic claims in this respect, the *Lotus Sūtra* probably outdoing all other texts in self-glorification. Here again, the Buddhist practice may have exerted some additional influence, if any was needed. But the basic orientation is, of course, quite different, and the Daoist conception of the text itself as a sacred object, a spell or a quintessential charm "crystallized" at the beginning of time is amply sufficient to explain the existence of such passages.

We may conclude that, particularly in the *Lingbao* tradition, Buddhist stylistic patterns regularly occur, without, however, dominating whole texts. The patterns taken over show a certain distribution: the central
[106] part of the scripture is seldom deeply affected, and the elements borrowed mostly occur in passages describing the gorgeous setting of the revelation with its supernatural crowds and its miracles, or in inserted narratives with an ornamental or enlivening function. The selection points to a superficial acquaintance with Buddhist scriptures without any clear preference for one particular *sūtra*; practically all elements are well-known *clichés* that occur in a great number of Mahāyāna texts.

(b) *Conventional terminology* comprises a great number of idiomatic expressions that figured in the Indian originals, and for which the successive schools of translators have coined standard Chinese equivalents; there are among the most characteristic features of Chinese Buddhist translated literature. A characteristic example is the use of the vocative, common in Sanskrit but very rare in written Chinese; the translators could find no better solution than awkwardly inserting it somewhere in the first part of a phrase: 如是舍利弗—切諸法 . . . "thus, Śāriputra, all *dharmas* . . ." Other examples are 賢者 (*āyuṣmat*) "Sir" and 仁者 (*bhadre*) "dear fellow" as forms of address; 衆生 and 羣生 (*sarvasattva*) "all beings"; the curious 所以者何 and 何以故 for "why is this?" (*tat kasya hetoḥ*); 於意云何 for "What do you think about it?" (*tat kiṃ manyase*), to mention a few at random.

It is a striking fact that in the Daoist scriptures studied here, even in those that exhibit many Buddhist features, loans of this type are comparatively rare; the only idiomatic expression which occurs a number of times is 羣 (or 衆) 生 "all beings". The very characteristic 所以者何 occurs only

twice,[36] there are some cases of 賢者,[37] and of the "brethren and sisters" 善男子善女人 (*kulaputra-kuladuhitā*)[38] which is extremely common in Buddhist narrative, although it is probable that the expressions like 道弟子男女 or 若男若女 are Daoist variations of the Buddhist term. We can, however, conclude that in our Daoist texts Buddhist formal loans are mainly found either at the level of major structures (the form of the scripture as a whole, as treated under a) above), or at the level of technical terms to which we shall turn presently. Before doing so we shall have a look at a very curious type of borrowing and adaptation: the influence of Buddhist transcriptions.

[107] (c) *The impact of transcribed Indian terms and proper names* can only be understood if we try to imagine how the average Chinese reader—Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike—must have undergone the effect of such completely unintelligible polysyllables as 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提 (*anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi*) and 菩薩摩訶薩摩訶衍僧那僧涅 (*bodhisattva-mahāsattva-mahāyāna-saṃnāha-saṃnaddha*), that stud the pages of so many translations of Buddhist scriptures. If his reaction was positive (for many educated Chinese may have rejected the whole thing as barbarian mumbo-jumbo), it may have been the effect of both the unintelligibility—hence the "mystery"—of the words and their "exotic" quality. The "mystery" aspect may have been heightened by the fact that some well-known Mahāyāna *sūtras* contain spells (*dhāraṇī*)[39] which even in the original

[36] DZ 325 (vol. 167; *L*), p. 16[b]; *ib.*, p. 21.

[37] *Ib.*, p. 23[a].

[38] DZ 177 (vol. 77; *L*), p. 5[a]; *ib.*, p. 10[a]; DZ 457 (vol. 202; *L*), p. 1[a].

[39] T 1300 *Mātaṅgīsūtra* 摩登伽經, attributed to Zhu Lüyan 竺律炎 and Zhi Qian 支謙 (ca. 230 CE), contains a *mantra* of the "repetitive" type (p. 400b: 阿磨利, 毘磨利 . . .), but the attribution is not attested before the late sixth century, and the style and terminology of T 1300 definitely point to a much later date. Two early texts which certainly contained spells of this type were the collections of spells taken from the *Mahāmāyūrī-vīdyārajñī* (大孔雀王神呪 and 孔雀王雜神呪) mentioned in *CSZJJ*, j. 2, p. 10a as translations made by the early fourth century *dhāraṇī*-specialist Śrīmitra; both works were lost at an early date. The earliest type of *mantra* known in China may have been the *dhāraṇī*-syllabarium (*arapacana* . . .) that figures in section 20 of Mokṣala's translation of the *Prajñāpāramitā in 25.000 verses* (291 CE): T 221 pp. 26b–c. The extremely popular *Lotus Sūtra* contains a long *dhāraṇī*, but in the earliest Chinese version (T 267 p. 130a; late third century) Dharmarakṣa has not rendered it phonetically; the spell has been "translated" in a most fanciful way; the first phonetic transcription is found in Kumārajīva's version (cf. note 52 below). We may conclude that before the fifth century *dhāraṇī* did not play a prominent role in the Buddhist scriptures known to the Chinese public; I therefore do not share Michel Strickmann's opinion (*Facets of Daoism*, p. 186) that they were very influential in Daoist circles as early as the fourth century CE.

Sanskrit have no meaning in the normal sense of the word. In any case it appears that this combination of mystery, magic and exoticism has formed the incentive not only to make use of such terms in Daoist scriptures (which was only done in a few cases), but also, more frequently, to coin new words of this type, and use a kind of pseudo-Sanskrit gibberish in proper names and in certain sacred texts.

This seems remarkable because one of the standard objections against
[108] Buddhism was that it was foreign or barbarian, and the use of outlandish words must have constantly reminded the public of its foreign origin. There can be no doubt that Daoism shared the general negative view of barbarians. Birth in China is a reward of virtue, just as birth in a barbarian frontier region 邊境 is a severe karmic punishment.

This concept, very frequently exposed in *Lingbao* scriptures, is an extremely interesting case of transposition. It a is well-established Buddhist idea that rebirth in an outlying territory (*pratyanta-janapada*) is one of the eight "difficult situations" (八難, *aṣṭāv akṣanāḥ*) in which one has no opportunity to meet a Buddha and to hear him preach, just as rebirth in the "central region" (中國 *Madhyadeśa*, originally the old heart-land of Buddhism) is a favourable condition because there the Buddhas appear. In the Daoist version 中國 has understandably, become China, and the outer darkness of the *pratyanta-janapada* has been filled with the concrete barbarian enemies at China's borders: 胡, 夷, 蠻, 貊, 戎, 氐, 狄, 羌.[40] After a thousand *kalpas* in Hell one may have a chance to be reborn among the I of the border region, "who have a human body but no human feelings" 雖有人形而無人情 (a *topos* which occurs many times).[41] Barbarians are, as always, characterized by the absence of the right norms of conduct, and even the barbarian himself who applies to become a member of the Daoist community in China is supposed ruefully to confess that on account of his former sins he was born in the frontier wilds 邊荒 as one who knows neither ritual nor etiquette.[42]

There were, however, redeeming factors. In the first place there is the authentic Buddhist tradition that Sanskrit was a divine language created (together with the *nāgarī* script) by the God Brahmā, and that after the

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40 DZ 1367 (vol. 1040; *S*) j. II, p. 7^b.

41 E.g. DZ 97 (vol. 49; *L*) j. IV, p. 22^a; DZ 455 (vol. 202; *L*), p. 3^a; DZ 457 (vol. 202; *L*), p. 8^a; DZ 1411 (vol. 1052; *L*), p. 9^a.

42 DZ 1243 (vol. 991; *T*), p. 5^a: 先因醜悪生出邊荒, 不識禮法, 不知儀方. . . . In the same way the gift of the "correct" religious garment 法服 will assure the giver of a civilized rebirth in China: DZ 177 (vol. 77; *L*), p. 8^b: 令人世世長雅, 逍遙中國, 不墮邊夷.

formation of our universe it was brought to the world of men by gods who had descended to feed upon the "fat of the earth".[43] The tradition
[109] was known in Daoist circles, as is proved by the terminology used (梵語, 梵音) and by the fact that certain esoteric texts in that language are found in the heavens: they are the "spontaneous jade characters (containing) the esoteric sounds of the heavens" 諸天內音自然玉字 which contain the "secret language of the Great Brahmā" 大梵隱語.[44] Being associated both with the gods and with the beginning of our universe, the Buddhist tradition was easily incorporated in *Lingbao* lore with which it seemed to have so much in common.

Secondly, the *huahu* theory, which already served so many purposes, could also make Sanskrit more acceptable. "When Laozi had gone westward to convert the barbarians and when he taught the people of foreign countries to read the scriptures (he produced), he made much use of the sounds of Brahmā-heaven, just because it was something that the Daoists (in those countries) liked" 老子西化胡, 教外國讀經時, 多是梵天音也, 適道士所好耳.[45] This may especially refer to "Daoists" in foreign countries, because the same text states that "(in China?) the right way to read scriptures is to take the Chinese pronunciation as model; that is, the correct pronunciation used by (the gods of) the Nine Heavens (or: the Ninth Heaven, which is not that of Brahmā?)" 讀經之法, 法中夏之音, 此是九天之正音也.[46] And even on Mt. Kunlun there seems to have been a bilingual situation with a distinct class-nature, for the Saints 聖人 all speak Sanskrit which is very melodious, whereas the Immortals 諸仙 mostly speak Chinese.[47] Small wonder that the esoteric text of the *Sandong jing* 三洞經 on Mt. Kunlun is stored in a place bearing the mixed-pseudo-Sanskrit name of "Yuan-nalavastu" 緣那羅衛.

Borrowing of authentic transcribed terms is comparatively rare; apart from the very common 魔 (*māra*) and 劫 (*kalpa*), and the the words 佛 (*buddha*); 桑門 or 沙門 (*śramaṇa*); 分衛 (*piṇḍapāta*) and 釋迦 (*śakya*) that incidentally occur in passages directly referring to Buddhism, it is limited to the names of Five Heavens (from the series of Nine found in scriptures of various traditions) and to those of the Four Continents;

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43 "The Gods speak the Āryan language", (*Abhidharmakośa* T 1558, j. 11, p. 60b; trsl. L. de la Vallée Poussin, vol. III, p. 165). Cf. Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信享, *Bukkyō daijiten* 佛教大辭典 (2nd ed., Kyoto, 1954) p. 4682.3, and *Hōbōgirin* 法寶義林 p. 110 s.v. *Bongo* 梵語.

44 DZ 97 (vol. 49; *L*) j. I, p. 15[b]; *ib.*, j. III. p. 6[a].

45 DZ 425 (vol. 194; *L*), p. 7[a].

46 *Ib.*, p. 7[a].

47 *Ib.*, p. 9[a].

both will be treated below in the section devoted to cosmology. Pseudo-Sanskrit terms, easily recognizable by their typical "transcription characters" such as 闍, 那, 婆, 郁, 陀, 摩 etc., are used in two different ways: as "esoteric names" 內諱 of paradise-like regions and of persons of superhuman status, or as sacred spells kept in those regions or in the Heavens.
[110]

One of the most typical examples is found in a _Shangqing_ text[48] that contains a fanciful description of the "outer countries" 外國 lying beyond the Four Continents of Buddhist tradition, to which have been added, apparently under the influence of the equally Buddhist 十方 orientation (which incluses zenith and nadir), two more "outer countries," situated above and below the earth, and therefore not related to any continent. The scheme seems to be an interesting triple compromise between (1) the old Daoist conception of terrestrial paradises in a horizontal plane, (2) the later one, both Daoist and Buddhist, or a vertical system of Heavens, and (3) the exclusively Buddhist concept of Buddha-worlds in the Ten Directions of Space, including nadir. The text, which shows many signs of Mahāyāna influence, gives for each region a description of its inhabitants, the size of their bodies, their life-span, their celestial joys and the supernatural vegetation. As in Sukhāvatī, the inhabitants of each Ultima Thule make music and sing hymns, but in this case each hymn consists of six six-syllable lines that are clearly modelled on Sanskrit transcriptions, the only concession to Daoist taste being that they rhyme. By way of illustration (in which I have rendered the pseudo-Sanskrit syllables according to their most common transcription value, in order to bring out their exotic effect; syllables that do not belong to the systems of conventional transcription have been rendered in capital letters with their modern Chinese pronunciation): 90.000 _li_ beyond the eastern continent of Pūrvavideha (弗于逮) there is the country of 呵羅提 *Haratī; where an esoteric hymn is sung that begins with the words 擅阿夷提那維 *_danājitinavi_/ 越家摩須雲持 *_va_JIA_masu_YUNCHI/ 曇眞釋遮緣陀/ *_dhar_(_ma_)_kiṃśak_(_ya_)_ja_YUANdha. . . . Such hymns are also sung beyond the other three continents in regions called, respectively, 伊沙陀 *_Iṣatā_, 尼維羅綠那 *_Nivira_LÜ_nā_, and 旬他羅 *_Suntarā_.[49]

An even more extensive use of _hierolalia_ is found in a _Lingbao_ text in which nearly a whole chapter is devoted to the heavenly sounds 天音 of

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48 DZ 1373 (vol. 1041; _S_), pp. 4^b–15^b.
49 _Ib._, p. 6^b.

the Thirty-Two Heavens, in four groups of eight.[50] Each Heaven possesses [111] a mystical eight-syllable inscription, many of which are clearly pseudo-Sanskrit (unlike the Heavens of the series of Nine, the names of the four groups of Eight do not show any Buddhist influence). Thus, the inscription of the first Heaven of the first group, called Taihuang baizeng 太黃白曾天, says 亶婁阿薈無惒觀音 **dhar*(*ma*)*ruyabhāmova*-GUANYIN", and another one 那育郁馥摩羅法輪 **naśokayubhuktimāra*-FALUN. As is shown by these examples, the system of conventional transcription characters is not consistently applied, and some spells contain bits of Buddhist lore in understandable Chinese, such as 觀音 and 法輪. Sometimes an attempt is made to pattern a pseudo-Sanskrit word after a genuine Indian proper name, such as the fabulous county of 緣那羅衞 *YUANnalavastu, probably inspired by 迦維羅衞 Kapilavastu, the Buddha's birth-place and therefore well-known from all Buddha-biographies since late Han times.[51] In all cases the context proves that such "Brahmā-sounds" were not intended as mere embellishments of the text; they form a special type of incantation. The disciple is supposed to chant the hymns, "inscriptions" and esoteric names, while mentally visualizing the appropriate region or Heaven and inviting the supernatural beings to appear before him. Although this is of course a fundamentally Daoist form of meditation, it may well be that in this particular case, which is so obviously associated with Buddhist transcriptions, it was influenced by the practice of "commemoration of the Buddha" (念佛, *buddhānusmṛti*), especially as developed in popular Āmidism with its "visualization" of the Western Paradise and the chanting of the 南無阿彌陀佛 invocation. There is, however, no recognizable attempt to imitate spells of the common *dhāraṇī* type with their typical repetitive structure.[52]

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[50] DZ 97 (vol. 49; *L*) j. III, pp. 7^{a}–28^{a}.

[51] DZ 425 (vol. 194; *L*) p. 9^{a}; cf. T. 185, p. 473b. j. T 184 修行本起經 (ca. 200 CE) p. 463b 迦夷衞, but p. 468a 迦維羅衛國; T 185 太子瑞應本起經 (first half third century) p. 473.2 迦維羅衞; T 186 普曜經 (late third cent.) p. 486a *id.*; also in T 188 異出菩薩本起經 p. 618a (wrongly attributed to the early fourth century translator Nie Daozhen 聶道眞; one of the sources used by Zhi Qian in compiling T 185, and therefore probably late second or early third century).

[52] E.g. T 262, p. 58b: 安爾，曼爾，摩摩禰、目帝、旨隸、遮梨第、賖咩，賖履多，瑋履多，瑋羶帝、目多履 (*anye manye mane mamane citte carite same samitā viśānte mukte muktatame* . . .); Sanskrit text ed. U. Wogihara and C. Tsuchida, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, Tokyo 1958, p. 335, trsl. H. Kern (*SBE* vol. XXI, Oxford 1909) p. 371; trsl. of Kumārajīva's version in L. Hurvitz, *The Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma* (NY 1976), pp. 320–321; Murano Senchū, *The Sūtra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law* (Tokyo 1975), pp. 295–296.

[112] The Daoist use of pseudo-Sanskrit is a very curious or even bizarre example of the way in which isolated elements of Buddhist origin were incorporated, and by their incorporation acquired a completely new function. This is a general phenomenon fundamental to the whole mechanism of borrowing: the more an element is taken over in isolation, dissociated from its original context, the easier will be its complete digestion and its change of meaning and function. The structure is only basically affected when whole complexes are taken over. This principle can also be observed in the incorporation of isolated doctrinal concepts to which we shall turn now.

4. *Conceptual Borrowings*

Our treatment of conceptual borrowings will be based on a survey of "technical" Buddhist expressions found in our Daoist texts. According to the principle indicated above (pp. 86–87) we shall treat in this section such Buddhist doctrinal concepts that in their original context usually were part of a larger complex, but which in Daoist scriptures appear as isolated loans detached from their original associations. Thus, for example, the expression (*ru*)*ding* (入)定 (*samādhi*) in its Buddhist sense denotes a system of mental concentration, usually in four stages corresponding with the four divisions of the highest Sphere of Existence, that of the Formless 無色界; it is part of a complicated scheme of yoga-exercises intended to lead the disciple through a number of mental states of decreasing sense-perception, up to the highest level in which both consciousness and non-consciousness have ceased to exist. In its Daoist context 定 still means something like "mental concentration" or "fixation", but here it has been drawn into the moral sphere by being associated with a series of "commemorations" 念 designed to focus the mind on good works and universal salvation.[53] In the same way, the expression *liu qing* 六情 (*ṣaḍāyatana*) originally means the six senses with their objects and with the particular kind of sensorial consciousness associated with each of the sense-organs, and as such they are part of a whole complex of ideas about the composition and functioning of man as an aggregate of material and immaterial elements—a complex of which surprisingly little has been absorbed in Daoism. In Daoist text, where the six sense-organs do figure in passages

[53] DZ 347 (vol. 179; *L*), pp. 1^b–5^b.

[113] strongly influenced by Buddhist terminology, they have been detached from the original complex; the six organs are there, and they are indeed described as sources of mental disturbance due to external impressions, but for the rest they are, in true Daoist fashion, associated with the six penetrating powers 六洞, with the various classes of gods residing in the respective sense-organs, and with Heaven, Earth, and the four cardinal directions.[54]

There are a number of Buddhist terms that do not require further comment, as even in their original context they are largely ornamental: 七寶 (*saptaratna*) "the seven precious substances"; the names of such precious materials, notably 琉璃 *vaiḍūrya*; the term 長夜 (*dīrgharatra*), the "Long Night," in Buddhist usage used for all the woes of existence, but in Daoist texts especially indicating the darkness of Hell; and the epithet 無上眞正 in 無上眞正道 "the unsurpassed true and correct Way" which clearly imitates 無上眞正菩提 *anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi*. I have listed them here, because in spite of their doctrinal insignificance they must be recognized as signs of Buddhist influence. The same can be said about a few terms only occurring in passages that directly refer to Buddhism (see above, pp. 89–96). The remaining isolated loans of Buddhist doctrinal terms will be listed below in alphabetical, order, with a short indication of their value both in their original context and in Daoist usage.

(1) *zhihui* 智慧 (*prajñā*). Wisdom, particularly the liberating, transcendent Insight into the true (i.e. illusory) nature of all phenomena. In Daoist texts the term has no such connotation. It sometimes simply means "wisdom" or "intelligence",[55] but in most cases it appears in a purely moralistic context; it is the insight in correct social and religious conduct, as exemplified in a series of rules, commandments and prohibitions.[56]

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, *prajñā* is especially associated with the Doctrine of Emptiness (空, *śūnyatā*) as set forth in *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. I shall revert to it below (p. 119) when dealing with the conspicuous absence of any influence of *Prajñāpāramitā* thought in Daoist scriptures.

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54 DZ 177 vol. 77; *L*), pp. 6^{a}–7^{a}; *ib.*, pp. 9^{b}–13^{b}.

55 e.g. DZ 97 (vol. 49; *L*) j. IV, p. 21^{b} (opposed to 愚聾); *ib.*, p. 23^{a} (parallel to 開聡).

56 Very clearly so in what forms the nucleus of DZ 177 (vol. 77; *L*): the six 智慧閉塞六情上品誡 (pp. 6^{a}–7^{a}); the six 智慧度生上品大誡 (pp. 7^{a}–8^{a}); and the ten 智慧十善勸助上品大誡. In DZ 1344 (vol. 1032; *S*) j. III, pp. 11^{b}–15^{a} we find another series of moral norms which "agree with 智耆慧".

[114] (2) *falun* 法輪 (*dharmacakra*) the “wheel of the Law”, an image derived from the theme of the Cakravartin, the ideal monarch “Turner-of-the-Wheel”; his religious counterpart is the Buddha who in Benares “set the Wheel of the Doctrine into motion” by his first preaching—hence a general term for the revelation of the Doctrine. In Daoist texts it also occurs as a very general expression, something like “the true Way” or “salvation”.[57]

(3) *famen* 法門 is in archaic and early translations used for both *dharmamukha* “entrance or introduction to the Doctrine” and *dharmaparyāya* “way of teaching the Doctrine”. In Daoist usage the metaphor has become much more concrete, 門 being interpreted in a literal sense, either as “door” (as in 開張法門 and 廣開法門 “widely to open the Door of the Doctrine”,[58] or even in the sense of “family,” as in 得生法門.[59]

(4) *fashen* 法身 (*dharmakāya*) is in Mahāyāna scholastics the highest of the three bodies of the Buddha; it is the “abstract” Buddha considered as the embodiment of the absolute Truth, which is therefore universal, free of all characteristics, and timeless. It rarely occurs in the Daoist scriptures studied here; the only time that something is said about it it is quite clear that the Daoist interpretation of this extremely difficult and abstract concept has little to do with its original meaning, for there it is said that the ignorant masses by their sins “damage and harm the *fashen*” 毀損法身.[60]

(5) *fanren* 凡人 (*pṛthagjana*), a “common man” outside the sphere of Buddhist religious life. In a Daoist context the term seems to refer to ordinary people who may aspire to the lower level of saintliness, but to whom the higher revelations are not accessible.[61] The term is therefore embedded in a complex of beliefs and prohibitions concerning esoteric transmission and secrecy that is foreign to the whole spirit of non-Tantric Buddhism.

(6) *ruding* 入定 (*samādhi*), see above, p. 112.

(7) *kong* 空 (*śūnyatā*), “emptiness”, the illusory nature of all phenomena which is a fundamental conception in many Mahāyāna *sūtras*, particularly of the *Prajñāpāramitā* type. The term is only once used in an explicit way, but after an introductory phrase, in which the illusoriness of the Three Times (三世, *tryadhvan*)—a basic theme in *śūnyavāda* Buddhism—is indeed correctly stated, the concept is elaborated in a way that has very little to do with the Buddhist idea of Emptiness:

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57 E.g. DZ 97 (vol. 49; *L*), p. 25a: 身入法輪之門; DZ 177 (vol. 77; *L*), p. 8b: 法輪將至、將得仙道.

58 DZ 330 (vol. 167; *L*), p. 3a and DZ 347 (vol. 177; *L*), p. 7b.

59 DZ 346 (vol. 177; *L*), p. 6a.

60 DZ 785 (vol. 562; *T*), p. 18a.

61 DZ 344 (vol. 177; *L*), p. 12a: the *fanren* may study the *Daode jing* and even ascend to the Hall of Heaven, but the great esoteric texts such as the 大洞眞經 must not be revealed to him.

> In the Three Spheres of Existence the three times (past, present, and future) are all empty. If one knows the emptiness of the three times, [115] one realizes that even if one has a body, it will all be reduced to emptiness. If one understands this principle of reduction to emptiness, one is able to forget one's body. How would a person who is able to forget his body still love it? Once he does not love (even) his (own) body, he is able to abstain from loving anything at all—the Way will be the only thing he loves. If a person is able to love the Way, then the Way will also love him; and only he who is loved by the Way will return to Perfection. . . .[62]

(8) *liu qing* 六情 (*ṣaḍāyatana*) the Six Senses, see above, p. 112.

(9) *san cheng* 三乘 (*triyāna*) the "Three Vehicles" or religious careers: the Small Vehicle 小乘 of the disciples (*śrāvaka*, "auditors" 聲聞) who strive after arhatship and permanent extinction for their own sake; the Vehicle of the Solitary Enlightened Ones (辟支佛, *pratyekabuddha*) who realize Enlightenment and then pass into extinction without preaching the Doctrine to others; and the Great Vehicle 大乘 of the Bodhisattva who strives after salvation for the sake of all beings. The term 三乘 occurs incidentally in Daoist scriptures, but no explanation is ever given (unlike 小乘 and 大乘 which have a highly interesting doctrinal content that shall be treated below, p. 134). The context suggests that it is used in a very loose and indistinct way, something like "religious life".[63] We could hardly expect a more specific use of the term, since in Daoism no concept appears to have been developed that is comparable to the career of the *Pratyekabuddha*.

(10) *san gui* 三歸 (*triśaraṇa*), the formula of "triple refuge", by which the devotee surrenders himself to the "Three Jewels": the Buddha, the Doctrine and the Community of monks. In Daoist usage its meaning is completely different, because in the Daoist version of the formula "three" does not refer to the Three Jewels 三寶 (see under 11) but to three aspects of the devotee's own person 歸身, 歸神, 歸命.[64]

(11) *san shi* 三世 (*tryadhvan*), see above under 空 (7).

(12) *san bao* 三寶 (*triratna*): the Three Jewels, i.e. the three main elements of Buddhist religious life: the Buddha, the Doctrine and the monastic Community. In our Daoist scriptures we find two widely different explanations of the term. The first one seems to be patterned after Buddhist usage: the Way, the Scriptures, and the Master 道, 經, 師.[65] The second one, also found in a *Lingbao* scripture, is applied to another triad, viz. 天寶君, 靈寶君, and 神寶君 who are the gods of, respectively, the 大洞, 洞玄 and 洞神.[66] The double use of the term may be coincidental, the first being derived from

[62] DZ 325 (vol. 167; *L*), p. 4[b].
[63] DZ 330 (vol. 167; *L*), p. 3[a]; DZ 347 (vol. 177; *L*), p. 7[b]; DZ 1314 (vol. 1026; *S*), p. 47[b].
[64] DZ 330 (vol. 167; *L*), p. 8[b].
[65] DZ 1114 (vol. 758; *L*), p. 12[a]; DZ 1344 (vol. 1052; *S*) j. III, p. 14[a].
[66] DZ 318 (vol. 165; *L*), p. 1[a].

a Buddhist example, and the second one being a triplicate expansion of a single *lingbao*.

[116] (13) *shen chu shuihuo* 身出水火, "the body producing water and fire", the "twin miracle" (*yamaka-prātihārya*) often performed by Buddhas and saints, particularly before entering Nirvāṇa. In the Daoist context the theme appears to be connected with the belief that an intense internal heat, provoked either by drugs or by respiratory concentration techniques, could be used to destroy the mortal elements in one's body.[67]

(14) *si zhong* 四衆, and

(15) *si bei* 四輩 (*catuḥ-pariṣad*), the Four Groups of religious life, viz. monks, nuns and male and female lay devotees. The term is rather loosely used in Daoist scriptures, notably in the closing formula which is clearly imitated from Buddhist *sūtra* style: 於是四衆同時稽首. . . .[68] It also occurs in one out of a series of negative commandments, stating that one should not wrangle with nor criticize the 四輩;[69] here it may refer to four categories of religious professionals and lay devotees, analogous to Buddhist usage.

Fifteen doctrinal terms borrowed from Buddhism, most of which have, moreover, been so completely integrated in Daoist complexes that their original meaning and function have changed beyond recognition, whereas the remaining terms have become so generalized that they hardly mean more than "truth" or "religious life". It is not a big harvest. However, its very poverty allows us to draw an important conclusion. In the first place, the selection of terms again confirms the conclusion drawn from our survey of stylistic features (above, p. 105): the terms are extremely common and unspecific; without exception they belong to a "basic Buddhist vocabulary" known to anyone superficially acquainted with Mahāyāna Buddhism. In fact, they are so common that they probably all occur a number of times in a single major scripture such as the *Lotus Sūtra*. Secondly, it is again obvious that the overwhelming majority of loans at this level are found in the scriptures of the *Lingbao* tradition. Thirdly, the extreme distortion and devaluation in meaning and function prove that Buddhist influence even in the *Lingbao* tradition was far from evenly distributed. As we shall see in the next section, most conceptual borrowings are not of the isolated type presented here: they clearly are clustered in three complexes. Outside those complexes Buddhist influence was slight and superficial: a handful of terms which have been absorbed and digested to such and

[67] Cf. Isabelle Robinet, "Metamorphosis and Deliverance from the Corpse in Daoism", *History of Religions* 19 (1979), pp. 37–70, esp. p. 62 and pp. 66–67.

[68] DZ 369 (vol. 181; *L*), p. 19[a].

[69] DZ 177 (vol. 77; *L*), p. 2[b].

extent that they virtually have lost their identity, and in no case have basically affected the structure into which they were incorporated.

[117]

5. *Complex Borrowings*

Let us again, at the risk of unreadability, begin with a survey of the remaining Buddhist terms, with a minimal indication of their original content, in alphabetical order.

(1) *jie* 劫 (*kalpa*) world-age, cosmic period.
(2) *chi jie* 持戒 (*śīla*) discipline, keeping the commandments; the second of the six Supreme Virtues (*pāramitā*).
(3) *jianshu* 劍樹 (*asipattravana*) the infernal torture of the "knife-leaved trees".
(4) *jingjin* 精進 (*vīrya*) zeal, energy; the third of the six *pāramitā.*
(5) *zhuanlun shengwang* 轉輪聖王 (*cakravartin*) the universal monarch "Turner-of- the- wheel".
(6) (*Ju*)*yeni* [俱]耶尼 ([*Apara*]-*Godānīya*) name of one of the Four Continents, situated on the West.
(7) *elou* 悪漏 (*āsrava*) the "evil outflows".
(8) *Fan* 梵 (*Brahmā*) name of a god and of several classes of gods.
(9) *Fanzhong tian* 梵衆天 (*Brahmakāyika*) name of a class of gods.
(10) *Fanfu tian* 梵輔天 (*Brahmapurohita*) idem.
(11) *Fanmojiayi tian* 梵摩迦夷天 (*Brahmakāyika*), id. (cf. 9)
(12) *futian* 福田 (*puṇyakṣetra*) "field of merit": a propitious karmic situation built up by the practice of good deeds in successive lives.
(13) (*Fu*)*yudai* [弗]于逮 (*Pūrva-videha*) name of the southern Continent.
(14) (*Hua*)*yingsheng tian* [化]應聲天 (*Paranirmita-vaśavartin*) name of a class of gods.
(15) *xianghao* 相好: the 32 characteristic bodily marks (*lakṣaṇa*, 相) of a superior man (Buddha or Cakravartin), and his 80 secondary marks (*anuvyañjana*, 好).
(16) *xiaocheng* 小乘 (*hīnayāna*) the Small Vehicle.
(17) *renru* 忍辱 (*kṣānti*) patience if suffering; the fourth of the six *pāramitās.*
(18) *guotu* 國土 (*kṣetra*) region, "field", especially a "Buddha-field" (*buddha-kṣetra*), i.e. a world in which a Buddha is residing.
(19) *liu du* 六度 (*ṣaṭpāramitā*) the six Supreme Virtues practised by the Bodhisattva both for the sake of all beings and in order to accumulate karmic merit: charity (*dāna*, 布施), discipline (*śīla*, 持戒), zeal (*vīrya*, 精進), patience (*kṣānti*, 忍辱) meditation (*dhyāna*, 禪) and wisdom (*prajñā*, 智慧),
(20) *lunzhuan* 輪轉 (*saṃsāra*) the cycle of birth-and-death.
(21) *Mo* 魔 (*Māra*) more specifically
(22) *Mowang* 魔王 (*Māra* [*deva*]-*rāja*) Māra, the Evil One, as the personification of lust; Lord of the Sphere of Desire (*kāmadhātu* 欲界).
(23) *ba nan* 八難 (*aṣṭāv akṣaṇāḥ*) the eight unfavourable conditions which prevent one from gaining Enlightenment (rebirth in Hell; as a hungry ghost; as

an animal; as a very long-lived god; in a frontier region; being blind, deaf or dumb; adhering to heretical views; living in a world without a Buddha).

[118] (24) *benyuan* 本願 (*pūrvapraṇidhāna*) the "original vow" of a Bodhisattva to strive for Enlightenment and to practise the Supreme Virtues for the sake of all beings.

(25) *Boluonimi tian* 波羅尼蜜天 (*Paranirmita-vaśavartin*) name of a class of gods (cf. 14); *var*. *Boluoniyebazhi tian* 波羅尼耶拔致天.

(26) *Bolidahe tian* 波梨荅惒天 (*Parīttābha*) name of a class of gods.

(27) *Bujiaole tian* 不驕樂天 (*Nirmāṇarati*) name of a class of gods.

(28) *bushi* 布施 (*dāna*) charity; the first of the six *pāramitās.*

(29) *san jie* 三界 (*traidhātuka*) the three Spheres of Existence, viz. the Sphere of Desire (*kāmadhātu* 欲界); that of Form (*rūpadhātu* 色界), and that of the Formless (*ārūpyadhātu* 無色界).

(30) *sanqian daqian shijie* 三千大千世界 (*trisāhasra-mahāsāhasra-lokadhātu*) a large world-system consisting of $1{,}000^3$ worlds.

(31) *san tu* 三途 (*trayo durgatayaḥ*) the three evil destinations: rebirth in one of the Hells; as a hungry ghost (*preta*); as an animal.

(32) *san ye* 三業 (*trividha-dvāra*) the three types of retribution: immediately in this life; in the next life; after the next life.

(33) *sejie* 色界 (*rūpadhātu*) the Sphere of Form, the second of the three Spheres of Existence (cf. 29).

(34) *shijie* 世界 (*lokadhātu*) a world-system consisting of 1000, 1000^2 or 1000^3 worlds.

(35) *shou jie* 守戒 (*śīla*) discipline, cf. (2).

(36) *shi fang* 十方 (*daśa-diś*) the ten directions of space (the eight cardinal and intermediate directions, zenith, and nadir).

(37) *si dengxin* 四等心 (*catvāry apramāṇāni*) the four Infinite Sentiments of a Buddha or advanced Bodhisattva: compassion (*maitrī* 慈); pity (*karuṇā* 悲); joy (*muditā* 喜); indifference (*upekṣā* 捨; in early Chinese translations usually rendered by *hu* 護 "protection").

(38) *dacheng* 大乘 (*mahāyāna*) the Great Vehicle.

(39) *daqian* 大千 (*mahāsāhasra*-[*lokadhātu*]) a world-system consisting of a thousand worlds; cf. (30).

(40) *Dafan* 大梵 (*mahābrahmā*) name of a class of gods.

(41) *Tahuazizai tian* 他化自在天 (*Paranirmita-vaśavartin*) id., cf. (25) and (14).

(42) *tianmo* 天魔 (*devaputra-māra*) the god Māra, cf. (22).

(43) *cibei* 慈悲 (*maitrī-karuṇā*) compassion and pity.

(44) *Doushu tian* 兜術天 (*Tuṣita*) name of a class of gods.

(45) *tongfu* 鑊釜 (*kukūla*) the infernal torture of the boiling kettle.

(46) *wu ku* 五苦 (*pañcaduḥkha*) the five kinds of suffering associated with the five karmic destinations (cf. 48).

(47) *wuse jie* 無色界 ((*ārūpyadhātu*) the Sphere of the Formless, the highest of the three Spheres of Existence; cf. (29).

(48) *wudao* 五道 (*pañcagati*) the five karmic destinations: rebirth in one of the Hells; as a hungry ghost; as an animal; as a man; as a god.

(49) *Yeni* 耶尼 ([*Apara*]-*Godānīya*) name of the Western Continent.

(50) (*Yan*)*fuli* [閻]浮利 (or 黎) (*Jambudvīpa*) name of the southern Continent.
(51) *yujie* 欲界 (*kāmadhātu*) the Sphere of Desire, the lowest of the Three Spheres of Existence; cf. (29).
(52) *Yudan* 鬱單 (*Uttara-kuru*) name of the northern Continent.

[119] It is very clear that, apart from the few isolated loans treated in the preceding section, all other borrowings belong to three large complexes:

– (1) *the cosmological complex* (time and space; the world-systems; the Four Continents; the many layers of Heavens and Hells; the Three Spheres of Existence).
– (2) *the complex of morality* (the Supreme Virtues; the Evil Outflows; the Original Vow; the Four Infinite Sentiments; "Hīnayāna" and "Mahāyāna" in their Daoist interpretation).
– (3) *the complex of karman and retribution* (the Field of Merit; the Three and Five Destinies; the Five Sufferings and Eight Unfavourable Situations, the bodily marks accumulated in successive lives; the infernal tortures).

And it is also very clear that this type of borrowing is very different from the one we treated in the last section, for, as we shall see, in these three sectors of Daoist religion the clusters of Buddhist elements mentioned above have deeply influenced the receiving system, and in some cases led to a complete reorientation. As I pointed out in the introduction (above, p. 88), it is impossible within the scope of this paper to treat these three large areas as much in detail as has been done with formal and conceptual borrowings, and in the following pages I shall only present the main lines of the argument and the main conclusions.

However, before doing so, let us follow a well-established Daoist principle and first look for what is *not* there, for in this case the conspicuous absence of other large complexes of Buddhist religion and world-view is as interesting as the presence of the three mentioned above.

The first very striking fact is the complete absence of typically scholastic terminology. Our list contains no trace of the enormous and highly sophisticated vocabulary coined by learned translators and their Chinese assistants since the introduction of the *Abhidharma* and *Vinaya* literature since the end of the fourth century, with their endless rubrication of concepts and very specialized terminology. In other words, even when dealing with complex borrowings, we observe a very low level of doctrinal sophistication.

The second lacuna is the complete lack of *Prajñāpāramitā* influence, apart from the single passage translated above, p. 114, in which
[120] the meaning of the concept—or rather non-concept—of Emptiness 空 is grotesquely distorted, and the curious use of *zhihui* 智慧 noted in the same section, which has nothing to do with the idea of *prajñā* in Mahāyāna thought. This silence is the more remarkable since the overwhelming influence of precisely this Doctrine of Emptiness in contemporary Chinese philosophy and metaphysics of the "Dark Learning" 玄學 type is well-known. The development of a Buddhist "Dark Learning" was based on half-understood Mādhyamika ideas as known first from the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures in various primitive and archaic versions, and from such scriptures as the *Śūraṃgama-samādhi-sūtra* 首楞嚴三昧經 (T 642) and the immensely popular *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* (T 474–475), and since the early fifth century also from the *śāstras* and commentaries ascribed to Nāgārjuna and his followers. Such notions were mingled with a number of basic ideas derived from *Laozi* in Wang Bi's rationalistic interpretation, *Zhuangzi* with its Guo Xiang commentary, and the *Yijing*. It is difficult to explain why we do not find the slightest trace of a comparable influx of Mādhyamika ideas in religious Daoism, not even in that of the *Lingbao* tradition. Geographical and social factors can be ruled out—the Lower Yangzi area was since the early fourth century the most fertile breeding-ground of Dark Learning of all types, and "class criteria" cannot have played a role, because both Dark Learning and religious Daoism as reflected in written sources are both definitely upper-class. The exclusion of *Prajñāpāramitā* elements may have been the result of incompatibility: a religion which is so much focused on the concrete pursuit of bodily Immortality had to close its doors to a doctrine that proclaimed, in most uncompromising terms, the utter illusoriness of all phenomena. However that may be, it is interesting to note that in early medieval times the impact of Buddhism on Chinese thought went in two completely separate directions and gave rise to two totally different types of hybridization; it is yet another argument for forgetting about the terms "Daoism" or "Neo-Daoism" when dealing with "Dark Learning".

Thirdly, there are some other lacunae which at first sight are even more surprising. If we consider the paramount place of the body in Daoism, why do we not find any sign of Buddhist influence in a field so extensively covered in Buddhist literature—the material and immaterial components of the individual; the stages of embryonic development, birth, old age, disease, death and decomposition; the Four Great Elements that combine
[121] to form the body and that fall apart in death? Considering the Daoist

preoccupation with meditation and trance, why is there no trace of borrowing from that field of Buddhist belief and practice, to such an extent that Buddhist respiratory techniques are only mentioned in passing as a specifically Buddhist practice, and that the term *chan* 禪 only occurs in the fancy name of one of the Nine Heavens?[70] In a system that is so hierarchical and that so clearly recognizes "stages of saintliness", from the terrestrial *xian* to the highest Perfected One, why have the Buddhist schemes (either the old Hīnayānist scheme of the four stages from *srota-āpanna* to *arhat*, or the Mahāyānistic ten stages 十地 of the Bodhisattva career) failed to make any impression? Here a simple explanation based on a kind of "market mechanism" cannot give the answers: there were areas in which Daoists were fervently interested, and where they yet did not incorporate Buddhist elements, even if the latter were well-known and abundant. Perhaps we must reject such a "supply-and-demand" argument altogether, and rather look for a structural explanation. Like any complicated system of thought Daoism had its "hard" and "soft" areas: "hard" areas where, even before contact with Buddhism was made, the ideas had already been elaborated and crystallized to such an extent that they were comparatively inaccessible to outside influences, and "soft" spaces that were "vulnerable" to outside influence, because in such areas ideas were either poorly developed or weakened by internal contradiction. It could well be that central areas of Daoist thought such as meditation, the human body and stages of saintliness were immune to Buddhist influence precisely because they since the beginning had enjoyed so much attention and therefore had crystallized into well-developed "closed" structures, whereas other areas—vague and conflicting ideas about life beyond the grave; indistinct and shifting representations of heavens and/or paradises; the conflict between collective inherited guilt and personal responsibility—were open to the impact of Buddhist ideas.

a) *The Cosmological Complex*

Indian fantasy (or what has more kindly been called "cosmic intuition") had given Buddhism the conception of a universe of staggering propor-
[122] tions: a dark unlimited space sprinkled with world-systems each consisting of a cluster of a billion worlds. In many of those worlds Buddhas are present, and some of them are paradise-like regions of indescrib-

[70] The second Heaven, called 上上禪善無量壽天; eg. DZ 55 (vol. 30; *S*), p. 5[b]; DZ 56 (vol. 30; *S*), p. 9[b]; DZ 1346 (vol. 1033; 1033; *S*), p. 1[a]; DZ 1347 (vol. 1033; *S*), p. 6[a].

able beauty and bliss—the results of the Buddha's karmic merit, and of his original vow to "adorn" his future "Buddha-field". Our own world, called Sahā 忍土 "the world of Endurance" is a flat disc, the rim of which is formed by a continuous circular mountain-chain called Cakravāḍa 鐵衞山. The disc consists of layers of earth, water, and wind. In the centre is Mt. Sumeru, surrounded in the four cardinal directions by the Four Continents. The southern continent Jambudvīpa is the world of men as we know it, but the other continents are also inhabited by human-like beings. Our "antipodes" live in the northern continent called Uttara-kuru which is described as a region of natural bliss where the people pass their life-span of one thousand years in a state of happy anarchy—a description which understandably made some impression in Daoist circles. Mt. Sumeru looks like a pyramid standing on its head, its inverted top protruding through the layer of earth into the subterranean ocean. Half-way on its four sides the gods of the lowest heaven, those of the Four Heavenly Kings (四天王 cāturmahārājika-kāyika), guard the four continents. All the other layers of the twenty-eight Heavens are superimposed on the broad upturned base of the central mountain. The twenty-eight Heavens are divided in three groups. The lower six, characterized by full enjoyment of the senses (and hence by desire), still belong to the lowest of the three Spheres of Existence 三界, that of Desire (欲界, *kāmadhātu*), to which the still lower levels of human life, animals, hungry spirits and inhabitants of the Hells also belong. At the top of this complex, and sometimes counted as a Heaven of its own, we find the realm of Māra who as the embodiment of lust reigns over the whole *kāmadhātu*. Next comes the higher Sphere of Form (色界, *rūpadhātu*), in which the cruder sensorial activities are unknown; they comprise eighteen layers of Heavens, subdivided into four groups, each of which corresponds to a certain level of *dhyāna*—a correlation which is based on the interesting belief that the disciple during a certain stage of *dhyāna* mentally is transferred to the corresponding Heaven in order directly to experience the detachment from the senses. Still higher, reaching up to the upper limit of existence, are the four Heavens of the Sphere of the Formless (無色界, *ārūpyadhātu*), peopled by abstract beings eternally steeped in the highest stages of mental concentration with which they are identified.

[123] Under our continent we find a system of Hells (地獄, *naraka*), eight major ones and a great many others. Being the lowest of the five karmic destinations (五道, *pañcagati*), they are regions of suffering, humiliation, and unspeakable torture. Here we also find the infernal Yāma who at first sight seems to be the autonomous judge which popular religion has made

of him. But, in fact, he is no more than an instrument of *karman*, for the amount or punishment is fully and inexorably fixed by the individual's own karmic burden, and no god can ever deviate from it.

On the contrary: gods are relatively powerless. They also are subjected to *karman* and retribution; they have got their exalted positions by merit accumulated in former lives, and once their *puṇya* 功德 is exhausted they are reborn into a lower *gati*. There is an interesting resemblance between the conception of divine existence in Buddhism, in which rebirth in one of the Heavens actually means filling a kind of "position" for a certain time, and the Daoist bureaucratic image of a hierarchy of immortal officials.

The world of men is subjected to a cyclical movement during which the life-span and the bodily size of human beings alternately increase and decrease; this is coupled with a cycle of moral degeneration and revival. For the rest, our world is, in good Indian fashion, completely unhistorical: whether a scene is situated in the recent past or millions of aeons ago, it is always the same world of urban civilization with its kings and brahmans, rich traders and courtesans, big cities and mighty armies. Occasionally, however, at the highest point of a cycle, worldly prosperity reaches its climax under the reign of a perfect "Monarch Turner-of-the-wheel" (轉輪聖王, *cakravartin*) who reigns over the Four Continents. But much rarer even than this are the appearance of a Buddha and the revelation of the Doctrine, and it is one of the greatest fruits of karmic merit that one is born at a time when a Buddha is active in this world. But since, according to the Mahāyānistic world-view, there are innumerable Buddhas active in other world-systems in the "ten directions of space" (十方, *daśa-diś*), it is always possible to strive after rebirth in one of those happy regions.

All this is, however, impermanent and perishable. Just as a world-system has evolved out of the emptiness of an "intermediate period," it will eventually be destroyed. The end of a cosmic era (劫, *kalpa*) and
[124] especially the end of a great cosmic era (大劫, *mahākalpa*) are marked by a series of disastrous floods, fires and storms which in three successive waves destroy the world-system up to the Heaven of the Abṛha gods. The highest layers—the upper four of the Sphere of Form and the indestructible Sphere of the Formless survive the cosmic disaster, and so do all beings, for all of them, even the inhabitants of the Hells, are reborn into those highest levels before the apocalypsis starts. There follows an intermediate period of darkness and emptiness, until the forces of the remaining *karman* of all beings start stirring again; a wind starts blowing and develops into a cosmic tornado which forms the basis on which a new

world-system is reintegrated. Thus in a very real sense the world itself is created by *karman.*

This long introduction was needed to provide a background against which the complex of Buddhist loans can be treated.

The first and most general type of loan concerns the aspects of time, space, and orientation. Here the Buddhist influence must be very old; it is to be found in scriptures of all Daoist traditions, for the expressions 劫 and 十方 are by far the most common terms of Buddhist origin, and they regularly figure in texts which do not show any other sign of Buddhist terminology. Needless to say that space and orientation are very old and fundamental element in Daoist thought and ritual, and the importance of the introduction of the “ten directions of space” may seem an unimportant detail. However, the Daoist scheme was no doubt originally based on the traditional Chinese fivefold pattern of the four cardinal directions plus the centre, in other words: on a conception of a horizontal liturgical space, and in this respect the introduction of the three-dimensional Buddhist space may have been an important innovation. But the older conception of a horizontal orientation has never been abandoned, and we find several interesting compromises in a number of Daoist scriptures, in which, for instance, a scheme of six regions is used by combining the “horizontal” four with the zenith and nadir of the Buddhist tradition.[71] Although
[125] the “innumerable world-systems” are repeatedly mentioned, the idea is hardly ever elaborated, and there is a marked preference for paradise-like regions not situated in the Heavens but in a horizontal plane.[72] Even if the clusters of the world-systems occasionally figure in our texts, there is at least one scripture in which they are situated in the *eight* directions, i.e.

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[71] DZ 1373 (vol. 1041; X), pp. 4^b–6^b. There is no specific reference to the sixfold division of space 六合 that occurs in *Zhuangzi* 2 (齊物論, ed. *Zhuzi jicheng* p. 13): 六合之外聖人存而不論 explained by Wang Xianqian as 天地四方. The most obscure of the cosmological models current in Han times, that of the *xuanye* 宣夜 theorists, appears to be based on the idea of an unlimited empty space surrounding the earth on every side, cf. J. Needham, *Science and Civilization*, vol. III, pp. 219–223, and his remarks about the resemblance between the *xuanye* model and the Buddhist representation of the universe, *ib.*

[72] 無極世界: e.g. DZ 97 (vol. 49; *L*), p. 22^b; DZ 23 (vol. 26; *L*), p. 2^b; DZ 417 (vol. 192; *L*), p. 5^b. Paradise-like regions in a horizontal plane: DZ 455 (vol. 202; *L*) the Dao visits the eight outlying worlds in the eight directions; DZ 33 (vol. 27 *S*), pp. 2^b–3^a the happy regions beyond the four continents; id. DZ 1373 (vol. 1041; *S*), pp. 4^b–6^b; DZ 23 (vol. 26; *L*), p. 2^b (*et pass.*) the five blissful countries.

the horizontal four cardinal and four intermediate directions.[73] This may also explain the interest shown in the four Great Continents, indicated by their authentic Indian names, in Daoist texts,[74] even though they sometimes figure in an astronomical or calendrical scheme without any Buddhist parallel.[75] On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the Nine Heavens, so often mentioned in Daoist scriptures of various traditions, are conceived as a vertical structure which, at least as far as the names are concerned, shows strong Buddhist influence.[76] There seems, however,

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73 Reference to the 三千大千世界 in DZ 1114 (vol. 758; *L*), p. 11[a], followed by an enumeration of 大千 in the *eight* directions of space.

74 The Four Great Continents: DZ 33 (vol. 26; *S*), pp. 2[b]–3[a]; DZ 1373 (vol. 1041; *S*), pp. 4[b]–6[b]. In DZ 33 [Apara-Go]dānīya is incompletely but correctly written 耶尼. In DZ 1373 we find 俱那邑 which appears to be a double corruption: 那 is no doubt a mistake for 耶, but 邑 should also be corrected to 尼, as proved by the Middle Chinese pronunciation of 邑: **iəp*, which could never render *-nīya*.

75 DZ 33 (vol. 27; *S*), pp. 2[b]–3[a].

76 The names of the Nine Heavens are found, with minor variations, in DZ 55 (vol. 30; *S*), pp. 5[a]–9[b]; DZ 56[a] (vol. 30; *S*), pp. 9[b]–14[a]; DZ 318 (vol. 165; *L*), pp. 9[b]–14[a]; DZ 1347 (vol. 1033; *S*), pp. 6[a]–8[a], and DZ 1365 (vol. 1039; *S*), p. 5[a]. They are as follows:

I. 鬱單無量天. No corresponding Buddhist name: the first two syllables are the usual transcription of the utopian northern continent of Uttarakuru.

II. 上上禪善無量壽天. No corresponding Buddhist name. Apparently associated with the "Western Paradise", i.e. the blissful world of the Buddha Amitābha or Amitāyus 無量壽.

III. 梵監天 (*var.* 順延天); probably a fancy form inspired by the four Brahmā-heavens and their various names (cf. VII, VIII and IX below). *Xuyan* is a pseudo-Sanskrit term; it cannot be a transcription of *Suyāma* because in Middle Chinese 延 was pronounced. **iän*, with a dental final.

IV. 兜術天 (*var.* 寂然天), *Tuṣita*, in the Buddhist hierarchy also the fourth heaven, but I have not found the name 寂然天 in any Buddhist source. *Tuṣita* is always explained as "satisfied" (*saṃtuṣita*); at first sight, the term 寂然 is intriguing because it could be a (grammatically impossible) derivation from *tuṣṇīm* "silently", but it could also be a coincidental resemblance.

V. 不驕樂天 or 波羅尼蜜天. The name 不驕樂 is the common translation of *Nirmāṇarati*, which in the Buddhist pantheon indeed corresponds to the fifth heaven. But 波羅尼蜜, the usual transcription of *Paranirmita* (*-vaśavartin*), is not the fifth but the sixth Buddhist heaven.

VI. 化應聲天 or 他化自在天. Both are common translations of *Paranirmita-vaśavartin* which also in the Buddhist scheme is the sixth heaven; the transcription of the same name forms stage V in the Daoist scheme (see above).

VII. 梵寶天 or 波羅尼耶拔致天. The latter name is again a transcription (this time a complete one) of *Paranirmita-vaśavartin*, the sixth Buddhist heaven. 梵寶天 is a fancy name, like III above. In DZ 318 this heaven is called 霊化梵輔天, a mixed form, the second part of which corresponds to *Brahma-purohita*, the eight Buddhist heaven. DZ 1347 has 鬱寶天, which has no recognizable Buddhist counterpart.

VIII. 梵摩迦夷天 or 梵衆天. Both correctly render *Brahmakāyika*, which is the seventh Buddhist heaven. In DZ 1347 VIII is called 高虚清明天. In DZ 56 the order of the names of VII and VIII is reversed.

IX. 波梨答惒天 or 大梵天. The first name is the common transcription of *Parīttābha*, the tenth Buddhist heaven; the second one corresponds to *Mahābrahmā* which in the Bud-

[126] no reason to regard the scheme of the Nine Heavens exclusively as a Buddhist intrusion, on the contrary. In the first place, there are traces of a corresponding scheme of three-plus-six heavens in a text which, though occasionally dealing with Buddhism, in this respect does not show any
[127] sign of Buddhist influence,[77] and it could well be that the group of six, regarded as "inferior," was later identified with the lower six Heavens of the Buddhist system—those who belong to the Sphere of Desire. In the second place, the names of most of the Nine Heavens may have been borrowed from Buddhist sources, but they are hopelessly misunderstood and mixed up with each other; it seems that they were used to "fill in" a pre-existing scheme of nine rather than as a new system taken over *en bloc* from Buddhist cosmology. The role of Māra as Lord of (*inter alia*) the lower six Heavens fitted into this system, although in Daoism the role of the Prince of Darkness is ambiguous—his functions seem to vary from that of a powerful god and temptator (the latter being a well-known Buddhist theme) to the more homely activities of imps, house-demons and *Poltergeister*.[78]

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dhist scheme is indeed the ninth. In DZ 318 the name of the ninth heaven is 無想無結無愛天, which may be a free invention, but it could also be a faint echo of the names of the four classes of gods of the *Ārūpyadhātu*, notably of the highest one, "Those who have neither conscious perception nor the absence of it" (*Naivasaṃjñānāsaṃjñā* 非有想非無想).

77 DZ 1205 (vol. 876; *T*), j. I, p. 6[a]: Zhang Daoling, appointed as the 三天之師, has come to "abolish the Three Ways of the Six Heavens" 罷廢六天三道; those Ways (p. 7[a]) "all are the old things of the Six Heavens, and they all are already discarded" 皆是六天故事悉已被廢. The expression "Nine Heavens" 九天 occurs already in pre-Han literature (*Sunzi*, 形篇, ed. *Zhuzi jicheng* p. 56: 善攻者動於九天之上); it is also found in *Huainan zi* (j. 3, 天文訓, pp. 36–37), but there the Nine Heavens clearly refer to the nine regions of the empyrean (九野) in the centre and the eight cardinal and intermediate directions, and not to a system of superimposed layers. The latter image is, however, clearly expressed by the term 九重 that is already attested in early Han times (*Hanshu*, Peking edition, p. 1052, containing the text of the nineteen sacrificial hymns composed under emperor Wu: 九重開, 靈之遊; Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques* de Sima Qian, Paris, 1898, vol. III, p. 612: "Les neuf étages (des cieux) se sont ouverts—voici les étendards de la divinité"). For the "Six Heavens" as forces of evil and degeneration see M. Strickmann, "The Mao-shan Revelations: Daoism and the Aristocracy", *T'oung Pao* 63 (1977), pp. 12–13 and Rolf A. Stein, op. cit., p. 59 and pp. 62–64; (the evil Six Heavens as opposed to the good Three Heavens 三天); for another type of opposition between the Three and the Six Heavens in a chronological sequence, and associated with *ling* 靈 and *bao* 寶, as set forth in the (probably third century) *Lingbao wufu xu* 靈寶五符序, see M. Kaltenmark, "Ling-pao: Note sur un terme du taoïsme religieux", *Memoires de L'Institut des hautes études chinoises* 2 (1960), pp. 560–567.

78 Buddhist scriptures often mention various kinds of Māra, notably "the four Māras", but apart from the fourth one, who is "Māra the god" (*devaputramāra*), the use of the term is clearly metaphorical, as the first three refer to impersonal entities: the *saṃskāra*s, the *kleśas*, and Death. In Daoist scriptures the meaning of 魔 has in most cases become generic

But the whole conception of the divine world was fluid in early Daoism, with many variations: the Thirty-six Heavens (no doubt based on the scheme of Nine), Thirty-two (in four groups of eight), Six and/or Nine
[128] (6 + 3), and both Nine and Thirty-two.[79] The orientation remained a problem, for in some texts it is quite clear that the Heavens are not simply superimposed, but in groups oriented on the cardinal directions. The confusion appears to have been deepened by the fact that passages describing paradise-like situations in a mixture of Buddhist and Daoist imagery the Buddhist conventional descriptions of blissful life in the Heavens, in the terrestrial utopia of Uttara-kuru, and in the ideal Buddha-fields in outer space have merged into one.

The same can be said about the Hells: here, again, a clear borrowing of Buddhist imagery, but sometimes the Hells appear to be situated in a horizontal plane, and the victims are like the Chinese convicts of real life condemned to forced labour in far-away border areas—in fact, their sufferings sometimes are described in precisely such terms.[80]

Finally, the Buddhist conception of time as a cyclical movement, punctuated by cosmic disasters that conclude an era of existence, and by cosmic reintegration that forms the beginning of a new one, has deeply influenced the Daoist conception of time, even if the content of the concept *kalpa* is ill-defined, and at times seems to be based on astrological computations which do not play any role in the Indian original.[81] But it is obvious that the authors (or redactors) of our texts were most of all fascinated by the concept of "*kalpa*-disasters" 劫災 which figure many times in various contexts, with several details derived from Buddhist lore, including the destruction of the lower Heavens by successive waves of

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and collective: "evil spirits" or "demons", as also appears from the stereotyped combinations, e.g. 衆魔 (*passim*, in scriptures of all traditions); DZ 1329 (vol. 1029; *T*), p. 2[a] 羣魔萬靈; *ib*.; p. 1[a] 制魔滅妖. Māra the temptator: DZ 1114 (vol. 758; *L*), p. 13[a]; DZ 1329 (vol. 1029; *S*), p. 5[a]; DZ 354 (vol. 179; *S*), p. 31[b]. In a more positive role Māra is charged by the celestial powers with the control of all spirits and demons in the six heavens that are under his command (DZ 1114 (vol. 758; *L*), p. 13[a]). In that way he has been incorporated into the group of celestial sovereigns who are associated with the five directions and the five colours, in his case obviously the north, and black (*ib*., p. 13[b]).

[79] *Nine Heavens*: see note 73; *Thirty-six Heavens*: DZ 1373 (vol. 1041; *S*) j. II, pp. 5[a]–15[a]; *Thirty-two*: DZ 97 (vol. 49; *L*), pp. 7[a]–28[a], and nearly the whole j. IV; both *Nine and Thirty-two*: DZ 1365 (vol. 1039; *S*), p. 5[a] sqq.

[80] Hells in a horizontal plane: DZ 455 (vol. 202; *L*), *passim*. Chinese-type punishments (carrying stones and filling up pools, or, in human terms, "irrigation and drainage"): DZ 1313 (vol. 1025; *S*), p. 2[a] 死為下鬼、灌河填山 . . .; DZ 1314 (vol. 1026; *S*), p. 54[b] 充役三途、負山運石以填無極之源; DZ 1331 (vol. 1030; *S*), p. 10[b] 七祖離幽徒.

[81] DZ 330 (vol. 167; *L*), p. 1[a].

water and fire, and the preservation of the highest levels where the most important esoteric texts are kept. But the context is of course very un-Buddhist. Immortals may be able to escape from the apocalyptic waters by levitation; one may protect oneself against them with charms, and one text even seems to indicate that Heaven and Earth in fact do *not* perish in the *kalpa*-disaster, because they are protected by the powerful *Lingbao* texts.[82]

Some general conclusions may be drawn concerning the "cosmological complex".

[129] In the first place, we are again struck by a combination of extensive borrowing and superficiality. The scheme of Nine Heavens uses Buddhist names, but it teems with mistakes, misunderstandings and wrong identifications. This again points to a general but very superficial knowledge of Buddhism, especially since the traditional scheme of Twenty-eight Heavens is found in many well-known Mahāyāna scriptures.

Secondly, the whole complex is much simplified; some basic Buddhist ideas which underlie the whole system, such as the relation between *karman* and the integration of the universe, or that between certain stages of mental concentration and corresponding Heavens, have not been taken over, and may have been unknown in the Daoist milieu.

Thirdly, the major contribution of Buddhism seems to be the introduction, or at least the reinforcement, of the idea of a three-dimensional ritual space, including zenith and nadir. It has further enriched the pre-existing notions of cosmic eras, and probably also the personalization of divine powers—notably by the introduction of *māra* as the embodiment of lust and evil. In fact, it could well be that the very use of the word *tian* 天 for "god" is of Buddhist origin, as it seems to be unknown in Chinese literature before the second century CE.

b) *The Complex of Morality*

There can be no doubt that Buddhist morality as codified in several sets of commands and prohibitions deeply influenced the system of Daoist ethics, although here again the influence is much stronger in the *Lingbao* tradition than elsewhere. In most cases it is impossible to trace the borrowed elements to specific sources, although when dealing with this complex we can at least identify the genres from which they have been

82 *Ib.*, p. 1^{b}.

derived. To judge from the terminology and from the general character of the Buddhist elements, they must ultimately be derived from three types of sources: the rules 戒 to be observed by Buddhist laics; the stereotyped list of ten "good works" which form an expansion of those rules, and the strictly Mahāyānist canon of ethical rules and principles known as the "Bodhisattva Vow" 菩薩戒. I say "ultimately," because especially in this field of concrete moral behaviour, knowledge of the conventional Buddhist rules is not necessarily derived from written texts; in particular the few and terse formulas of the "five rules of the lay devotee" 五戒
[130] (*pañcaśīla*) may well have been transmitted orally, just as in our culture the "honour thy father and thy mother" is not necessarily based on first-hand knowledge of the Pentateuch. The range of borrowed moralistic elements is strictly confined to Buddhist lay ethics—an important fact that confirms many of our conclusions drawn in preceding sections: there is virtually no influence of the very extensive codes of Monastic Discipline (律, *Vinaya*) with their extremely detailed rules, their wealth of illustrative cases, and their specialized vocabulary.[83]

Buddhist lay ethics originally were simple and concrete. Since very early times the moral of the laic's conduct had been prescribed by a set of negative rules which told the male and female lay devotee (for at this elementary level no distinction of sex was ever made) to abstain from (1) killing 不殺生; (2) stealing 不偷盜; (3) sexual misbehaviour 不邪淫; (4) lying 不妄語, and (5) drinking intoxicant liquor 不飲酒. The promise to observe these rules was, however, not a casual affair. The laic formally accepted the vows 受戒 during a ceremony in which the master first interrogated the candidate (the questions are a mitigated version of the ones that are posed to a person applying to enter the Order); the laic then pronounced the formula of the Triple Refuge 三歸, and after each rule that was pronounced by the master he repeated his resolve to observe it "till the end of his life" 盡形壽.

[83] The only exception is DZ 785 (vol. 562, *T*), Kou Qianzhi's 老君音誦誡經, which contains a few commandments that are clearly derived from *vinaya* rules regulating the deportment of a monk when visiting lay devotees; cf. Yang Liansheng 楊聯陞, "Laojun yinsong jie jing jiaoshi 校釋", *CYYCY Jikan* 28 (1956), vol. I, p. 47. Yang Liansheng specifically relates these passages to Prajñāruci's translation of the *Zhengfa nianchu jing* 正法念處經 (T 721), but the rules in question (walking upright, looking straight forward, not creating disturbances in the host's home by offensive behaviour, etc.) are well-known, and the passage in DZ 785 is rather based upon a general knowledge of Buddhist discipline than on a specific Buddhist text.

During the periods of fasting (six monthly fast-days, and three fortnightly fasting periods in a year) a few rules were added to the five: not to indulge in cosmetics, personal adornments, dancing, or music; not to sleep on "high beds" (but on a mat on the ground; it also implies sexual abstention), and not eat after noon.

Another set of elementary rules, also negative, and partly coinciding with the five listed above, is the set of "Ten Good Works" 十善業 (*daśa*
[131] *kuśala-karmāṇi*), actually, as the word 業 implies, a list of ten abstentions that produce good *karman*. It is mainly an elaboration of the Five Rules in which the fourth commandment, that of not lying, is followed by three other "Vocal sins" (slander 悪口, dishonesty 兩舌, and specious language 綺語), and to which three "mental transgressions" (covetousness 貪欲, anger 瞋恚, and heresy 邪見) have been added.

This simple system of negative rules was apparently felt to be sufficient as long as the lay community still played an indispensable but marginal role in religious life. In Hīnayāna Buddhism, very much centered around the monastic community as (if not in in theory, at least in practice) the only place where saintliness and release could be pursued, the lay believers had limited aspirations. By the accumulation of merit through their liberality towards the *saṅgha* and through the observance of the elementary rules they could hope to be reborn in Heaven, or at least to enjoy prosperity and high status in their next life on earth, but the higher goals of religious life—freedom from all attachment and desire, release and *nirvāṇa*—were practically reserved for those who had given up the world and "had gone forth into the houseless state." Since he had severed all relations with the world, the monk was subjected to a completely new code of conduct that regulated his behaviour in the smallest detail, for all worldly norms and conventions had ceased to exist for him. The lay devotee, however, remained part of the world; he remained a member of his caste and therefore bound to the many obligations and ritual duties prescribed by the *dharma* of his caste. That is why Buddhist lay morality is so little specific in its rules: it did not replace the laic's own group-*dharma* (for that would imply leaving the world and becoming a monk), but it added a general moral orientation to it. But the incompleteness of this Buddhist lay morality is also the reason of its greatness: by being unspecific, the rules are absolute and all-embracing, without any social or ethnic distinctions.

With the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism the scope of lay morality widened. The old rules were maintained, but in addition to these the idea that anybody could take the decision to strive for Enlightenment and

to enter the Bodhisattva career was translated into new codes of behaviour with much higher aims. These Mahāyānistic ethics were based on the well-known theme of the Six Extreme Virtues practised by any Bodhisattva, as they had for many aeons been practised by Buddha in former lives: [132] discipline, charity, zeal, patience under insult, meditation, and wisdom. Liberality (布施), which originally was mainly directed towards the *saṅgha*, was widened into the ideal of universal charity; love (慈) and compassion (悲) for all beings were strongly emphasized, and the old belief in the accumulation of karmic merit by the performance of good works was given a new altruistic content by the typical Mahāyānistic idea that such merit could be "transferred" on other beings to release them from suffering. The moral ideals of the Mahāyāna never were systematized into a single uniform canon comparable to the *Vinaya*, the more so since in Mahāyāna ethics the sharp distinction between monastic life and lay Buddhism had become blurred, for the Bodhisattva career was in principle open to monks and layman alike. In a number of texts, translated from the early fifth century onward, long lists of negative and positive rules, "vows" and confessions are listed, and historical sources mention many cases of Chinese emperors, courtiers and other illustrious layman solemny taking the "Bodhisattva vows"—no less than 48.000 monks and laics are said to have done so in the years 519–520, guided by the example of Emperor Wu himself. Among the texts which in various forms present the Bodhisattva's ideal code of conduct the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (T 1484), a fifth century Chinese apocryphal scripture wrongly ascribed to Kumārajīva, appears to have been very popular since early times (as it has remained till the present), and it may have been the main source of Mahāyāna influence on Daoist ethics so amply attested in our body of scriptures.[84]

The idea that the quest for Immortality should be combined with good works and high ethical principles is, of course, an old one, and there is no reason to assume a Buddhist origin for it. For norms of virtue and orderly social conduct Daoists had their examples nearer at hand: Confucian values were generally accepted, and in many respects Daoist morality appears to be a variant form of traditional ethics. Whenever the texts make a distinction between the traditional Confucian norms and the Daoist aims, they do so in a way that runs parallel to contemporary Buddhist apologetics: the worldly canons of social conduct form a useful base for religious life, and, conversely, religious life serves to complement and perfect the

[84] Cf. *Hōbōgirin* II, p. 142, s.v. *bosatsukai* 菩薩戒.

worldly code. The virtues of filial piety, loyalty, kindness, trustworthiness, sincerity and impartiality, together called the "way of (ordinary) man"
[133] 人道 or the "exoteric doctrine" 外學 form an indispensable first stage; the Daoist commandments can only be observed after this base has been laid, and without it it is impossible to effect inner transformation.[85] And is the Daoist ritual aiming at the release of seven generations of suffering ancestors not the highest perfection of Filial Piety?[86] It is therefore not surprising that we find several lists of prohibitions that are not or only marginally affected by Buddhist influence, and in which much attention is given to traditional social virtues. One *Tianshi* scripture is almost wholly devoted to the theme that moral conduct is of essential importance and that one should not rely too much on sacrifice and the trappings of ritual, but the description of moral life does not contain any trace of Buddhist influence,[87] and the canon of 180 rules pronounced by Taishang Laojun do not show any relation with Buddhist ideas.[88] An enumeration of the serious crimes requiring three years of heavy penitence, found in a *Shangqing* scripture, is only marginally influenced by Buddhist ethics, and most crimes are specific social offences of the traditional type, such as robbing the people, illicit intercourse within the clan, slandering meritorious people, and planning rebellion against the ruler.[89] The *Lingbao* scriptures are, as usual, deeply influenced by Buddhist examples, but even there one of the *Lingbao* decalogues is a mixture in which the first five rules, clearly copied from the Buddhist *pañcaśīla*, are followed by four traditional social prescriptions such as harmony in family life and appreciation of other people's virtue, the whole being rounded up by the Mahāyānist principle of not striving to obtain the Way as long as other beings have not gained release.[90]

The most striking phenomenon is, however, the overwhelming impact of Mahāyāna universal ideals that is shown in *Lingbao* scriptures. They are expressed in series of commandments 誡, "principles to be followed" 可從, "commemorations" 念, and "vows" or "good wishes" 願 of the purest
[134] Mahāyāna inspiration, and teeming with typical expressions such as "full

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85 DZ 344 (vol. 177; *L*), pp. 14[a]–15[a].
86 DZ 1114 (vol. 758; *L*), p. 12[b].
87 DZ 789 (vol. 563; *T*).
88 DZ 786 (vol. 562; *T*).
89 DZ 1314 (vol. 1026; *S*), p. 54[b].
90 DZ 325 (vol. 167; *L*), p. 7[b]. The only subtle difference between the Buddhist *pañcaśīla* and the first five Daoist prohibitions in this document is that instead of the Buddhist 不飲酒 "not to drink alcoholic liquors" we find 不醉 "not to become drunk".

of sympathy to help all living beings" 愍濟羣生; "with tender love widely to save" 慈爱廣救; "let me think of all beings and widely open the bridge (of Salvation)" 願念一切廣開橋梁; "in order that all may reach Release" 咸得度脫—in fact some, lists are so dominated by Mahāyāna ideas and terminology that they could as well figure in a Buddhist scripture of the 菩薩戒 type.[91]

The basic contrast between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna ideals was well-known in Daoist circles, even if its interpretation was somewhat onesided. In a number of passages Hīnayāna 小乘 is associated with the egocentric pursuit of salvation and Mahāyāna 大乘 with the altruistic ideal of "first save others, and then save oneself" 先度人, 後度身.[92] When a group of terrestrial Immortals ask why they after 3,600 years are not yet promoted to a celestial rank, Ge Xuan tells them that they have limited themselves to the Small Vehicle, "only wishing to save yourself and not being concerned about saving others, only seeking the Way for yourselves and not being concerned with other people's obtaining the Way", and that, he adds, is also the reason why ancient worthies such as Pengzu 彭祖 and Baishi 白石 only reached the ages of 800 and 3,000 years respectively.[93] Here we see that the opposition Hīnayāna-Mahāyāna is applied to different orientations within Daoism, one emphasizing egocentricity, and the other one stressing universality. There are also some texts in which the opposition is somewhat different, "Hīnayāna" being associated with outward ritual
[135] and mechanical means to effect Immortality, and "Mahāyāna" with mystic silence, meditation, and the practice of universal love. Hīnayāna suffers from verbosity, troublesome practices such as endless kowtows, lack of inner concentration, enormous ritual expenses, and egoistic wishes such as material prosperity, many children and many slaves. Such practices

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[91] The most typical examples are found in four closely related *Lingbao* texts, viz. DZ 177 (vol. 77); DZ 344, DZ 346 (both in vol. 177), and DZ 352 (vol. 178); the Ten Rules 十誡 (DZ 177, pp. 1^b–2^b; id. DZ 352, j. I, p. 3^a); the Twelve Principles to be Followed 十二可從 (DZ 177, pp. 3^a–4^a; id. DZ 352, pp. 3^b–4^a); the six Supreme Rules leading to Release. 度生上品大誡 (DZ 177, pp. 7^a–8^a); the long series of vows or good wishes 願 in DZ 344 (vol. 177, pp. 4^a–7^a, roughly corresponding to the 45 "commemorations" 念 in DZ 346 (vol. 177), pp. 1^b–5^b. There are, however, also lists of rules in the *Lingbao* scriptures in which the Mahāyānist element is much less conspicuous; such rules seem directly to have been patterned after the more modest prohibitions of the *pañcaśīla* and of the Ten Good Works, e.g. DZ 1 (vol. 1, *L*) j. I, p. 3^a: 不殺, 不害, 不嫉, 不妬, 不淫, 不盜, etc., and the ten prohibitions listed in DZ 671 (vol. 352; *L*), pp. 2^b–3^a.

[92] DZ 1114 (vol. 758; *L*); p. 6^b. The same phrase is also found in DZ 1115 and DZ 1205, see the next two notes.

[93] DZ 1115 (vol. 362; *L*), pp. 1^b–2^a.

may lead to the elimination of sins and even to rebirth in the Hall of Heaven, but not to Immortality.[94] And another text assures us that even daily practice of respiratory techniques, the chanting of scriptures, and the use of charms will be of no avail of one wants to realize the Mahāyāna, for the Great Vehicle means, first of all, the willingness to serve all beings.[95] In one respect one may even say that this Daoist universality went further than its Buddhist example, because it was based on the awareness of one single *qi* 氣 embracing all entities, even including plants and minerals: "One should tenderly love all entities as much as one's own self . . . all that contains the fluid 含氣, (even) trees and herbs, earth and ashes are all like myself, and I think of them as if they were my own children".[96]

In conclusion we may state that particularly in the *Lingbao* tradition, but occasionally also outside that movement Daoist morality was deeply influenced, or even re-oriented, by Mahāyāna ideals. The complex borrowed seems to be derived from contemporary lay Buddhism, both at the level of guide-lines for daily life (the negative rules of the *pañcaśīla* type) and that of ultimate ideals (as embodied in the "Bodhisattva vows"). The opposition Hīnayāna-Mahāyāna was interpreted correctly as "self-centered—universalistic," and incorrectly as "inner life—outward trappings"; in both cases the Buddhist notion enriched and deepened preexisting Daoist ideas about the mutual complementarity of ethics and "methods" 方術.

c) *The Complex of Karman and Retribution*

Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of Daoist views concerning the whole complex of sin, guilt, penitence, atonement and retribution is to
[136] be found in their bureaucratization—a tendency that is, of course, also observable in all other aspects of Daoist religion. This very fundamental tendency to translate religious beliefs and practices into bureaucratic terms is hardly found in mediaeval Chinese Buddhism, which even in a Chinese environment in that respect retained much of its Indian, utterly un-bureaucratic background. In a system where superhuman powers are represented as court officials and top administrators, prayers take the form of memorials or written petitions to the throne, and ascent to Heaven is

94 DZ 1205 (vol. 876; T) j. II, pp. 3^b–4^b.

95 DZ 1322 (vol. 1029, *S*), p. 3^a. Cf. also DZ 344 (vol. 177; *L*), p. 8^b, and DZ 1322 (vol. 1028; *S*), which is wholly devoted to the opposition of "methods" 方術 versus ethics; the inspiration is here mainly Confucian, but there are also clear signs of Mahāyāna influence.

96 *Ib.*, p. 5^a.

conceived in terms of appointment to celestial office, it is not surprising that sin, atonement and retribution are expressed in terms that reflect the administration of justice in a bureaucratic society. Sinful and virtuous deeds are carefully noted down and filed just as on the earth conduct-rolls are kept on all officials, serving as a basis for their future promotion or demotion. Just as commoners can only address themselves to the highest authorities through an official acting on their behalf, the devotees need the service of a priestly intermediary to address their petition 章 to the higher powers. The conventional formulas in which the supplicants' sinful indignity is set forth reflects the idiom of official documents with their tone of self-abasement and self-accusation. Life is risky and punishments are severe, but they can be bought off by sacrifice including considerable material expenses, just as in the human world persons can ransom themselves or their convicted relatives. However, this conception of sin and punishment also means that supernatural justice shared with its human counterpart the concept of collective guilt, which in Han times, at least for the most heinous crimes, implied the "extermination of the extended family, including the culprit's parents, presumably also his parental grandparents; his wife and children, and presumably his grandchildren; his brothers and sisters, and presumably even his married sisters".[97] It is a conception of collective guilt which is reflected in the religious sphere by the well-known Daoist belief in *chengfu* 承負, the burden of sins inherited from seven, nine or even more generations of parents and ancestors and in turn passed on to one's descendants. Many passages in scriptures of all traditions abundantly testify of the belief (a) that the supplicant is burdened by the sins of his forbears and, in turn, is likely to commit sins implicating his children and grandchildren; (b) that his own redemption
[137] also implies that of his deceased relatives; but also (c) that he himself can only be exonerated and expect promotion if those relatives are discharged, and that therefore (d) the ritual of self-incrimination, punishment and atonement should in principle be an act performed for both the supplicant and his suffering ancestors.[98]

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[97] Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, Leiden, 1955, p. 116.

[98] We should make a distinction, like some texts do, between *chengfu* which, strictly speaking, means that the burden of sin (or virtue) is passed from earlier to later generations, and what is called 延謑, which means that my own sins or virtues retroactively are visited upon my deceased parents and ancestors. Both types of implication are mentioned many times in our texts.

Some examples of *chengfu* (the term itself is of course very frequently used in the *Taiping jing*, but I have not found it in our body of texts): DZ 388 (vol. 183; *L*) j. III, p. 18^{b}:

Of course the Mahāyānist idea of "transfer of merit" (see above, p. 132) could in one way make a positive contribution to the *chengfu* complex, because it made it possible to use the karmic potential built up through good works (including the pious act of the ritual itself) to redeem one's ancestors; it is merely a particularization of the Mahāyāna ideal of "working for the benefit of all beings"—the same combination that is found in the well-known story about the institution of the Yulanpen rite that is performed for all suffering souls, but after all owes its origin to Maudgalyāyana's concern for his own suffering mother.

However, in three respects the incorporation of the Buddhist conception of *karman* and retribution created problems. In the first place it
[138] blurred the clear image of the original *chengfu* belief, because m addition to the supplicant's inherited sin it also burdened him with the load of guilt inherited from his own past lives, an ambiguous construction which many scriptures mention without any attempt to explain it.[99] In the

Huangdi has got his exalted position because of the virtue of his ancestors; DZ 615 (vol. 335–336; *T*), j. II, p. 31[a]: the premature death of a guiltless person is caused by the "surplus" of his ancestors' transgressions, just as their surplus of virtue is the cause of a sinner's seemingly undeserved happiness; "small transgressions only affect one's own person; great ones extend downward to one's children and grandchildren" 小過止其身, 大過下流子孫; DZ 405 (vol. 171; *S*), p. 13[b]: a prayer to obtain forgiveness for the sins committed by seven generations of ancestors; DZ 1345 (vol. 1032; *S*): the disciple whose ancestors have committed very serious crimes (enumerated here) is not allowed to defile the scriptures with his 餘殃之身; DZ 346 (vol. 177; *L*), p. 3[b]: 福流後代, 潤及子身.

Some examples of retroactive implication: DZ 1 (vol. 1; *L*) j. I, p. 4[b]: 殃及九祖, 長役鬼官; DZ 1114 (vol. 758; *L*), p. 15[a]: if one makes this scripture known to unworthy persons 七祖囚拎地獄、身履三悪之考; DZ 639 (vol. 342, *S*): 大罪禍及拎三祖, 小罪止身以受殃; a very far-going system of collective guilt is suggested by DZ 1367 (vol. 1040, *S*) j. II, p. 7[b]: 或中表相牽, 內外相染, 男女大小一切眷屬後世今生俱有罪過, 更相延誤.

[99] E.g. DZ 880 (vol. 582; *T*) ch. I, p. 9[b]: prayer to be relieved of the sins of seven generations of ancestors and of personal sins accumulated in the course of *kalpas*; DZ 615 (vol. 335–336; *T*), j. IV, p. 21[a] mentioning the supplicant's sins inherited from seven generations of ancestors; and *ib.*, V, p. 1[b] his own innumerable sins committed in former lives. I have not gone into the very complicated subject of Buddho-Daoist interaction in the field of confession and penitence—practices that can be traced back to the very beginning of organized religious Daoism. It is probable that at a later stage the Daoist complex of confession and expiation was influenced by the Buddhist ritual of "threefold penitence" (confession; joyful realization of merit and transfer of merit to others; exhortation directed towards the Buddhas to save all beings) to be performed by lay believers. However, in China this simple ritual developed into a more complicated "fivefold penitence" 五悔 that was closely associated with the class of (largely apocryphal) texts known as "Buddha names scriptures" 佛名經, and in this development we recognize an unmistakable influence of Daoist practices upon Buddhist ritual than the reverse. In a Buddhist perspective the subject has been extensively treated by Shioiri Ryōdō 塩入良道 in his "Chūgoku bukkyō ni okeru butsumyōkyō no seikaku to sono genryū" 中國佛教における佛名經の性格とその源流 (*Tōyō bunka kenkyūsho kiyō* 42, 1966, pp. 221–320) and "Chūgoku bukkyō ni okeru raisan

second place, the doctrine of rebirth disturbed the simple scheme of either "ascending to heaven" or "going down to hell," which had to be combined with the whole complicated mechanism of rebirth in the five *gati*. But the third and by far most serious contradiction lies in the fact that in Buddhism *karman* and retribution are, in principle, strictly individual, and that the whole concept of collective inherited guilt is not admitted.

There are some interesting signs that Chinese Buddhists from very early times realized that their idea of strictly personal responsibility was a new concept that had to be defended. They could do so on the basis of explicit scriptural evidence, for passages dealing with this theme are already found in a "Life of the Buddha," the two parts of which were separately trans-
[139] lated at Luoyang around 200 CE as *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經 (T 184) and *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經 (T 196). The relation between parents and child is fortuitous; the father and mother say "I have given birth to him; this is my child" 是我所生, 是我之子, but in fact the child is the product of his own karmic configuration, and even the very fact that he is born as a human being is the result of his conduct in past lives. For the same reason a mother is not responsible for the fact that her child is born blind or deaf, or very in-intelligent.[100] To the Chinese public, this stress upon the strictly individual character of sin must have been new and surprising, and many Chinese must have been impressed by the forceful way in which it is illustrated by the image of "death's messengers"—an old Buddhist metaphor, but known to the Chinese public mainly through the very popular cosmographical scripture *Da loutan jing* 大樓炭經 (T 23, early fourth century) in which the interrogation is put in the mouth of the infernal judge Yāma: "These sins of yours are not those of your father and mother, or your brother; they are not the sins of the king of gods, nor those of relatives and acquaintances, nor those of your ancestors who have passed away, nor those of *śramaṇas* and brahmans. It is you who have committed evil, and you yourself shall undergo the results!"[101]—a thundering accusation that

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to butsumyō-kyōten" 中國佛教における禮懺と佛名經典 (*Bukkyō shisōshi ronshū*, Tokyo 1964, pp. 569–590), as well as by W. Vande Walle in his study on Xiao Ziliang's 蕭子良 late fifth century compendium *Ching-chu-tzu ching-hsing fa-men* 淨住子淨行法門 (*GHMJ* j. 27), *Methode van rein gedrag voor de volgeling van het reine vertoeven* (unpubl. diss., Univ. of Gent, 1976), vol. I, pp. 150–168. The subject is to be reconsidered in the context of Buddho-Daoist interaction.

100 T 196, p. 153a.

101 T 23, pp. 286a–287b. According to "Dao'an's first catalogue of Buddhist scriptures (374 CE), the first translation of this very popular *sūtra* was made by Dharmarakṣa in 302 CE. The oldest extant Chinese version (T 23 大樓炭經; the title probably stands for *Lokadhātu-sūtra*) bears the names of Bo Faju 帛法炬 and Bo Fali 帛法立, who both were

recurs like a refrain after each questioning. And, apart from scriptural evi-
[140] dence, we have the testimony of early Chinese Buddhist lay devotees. The anonymous author of one of the earliest polemic treatises (*Zhengwu lun* 正誣論, early fourth century) argues against his Daoist opponents' belief in "retrograde retribution" implicating one's deceased ancestors,[102] and Xi Chao 郗超 (336–377) who in his unique Buddhist catechism "Essentials of Religion" devotes a whole passage to an exposition of the principle of individual retribution containing an eloquent plea against collective punishment.[103]

In many scriptures of various Daoist orientations the contradiction between personal *karman* and collective guilt seems to be tolerated without any attempt to solve it. It is only in the *Lingbao* tradition that we find a conscious effort to solve the dilemma, and knowing how deeply this Daoist tradition was influenced by Mahāyāna thought, no one will be surprised to learn that a clear choice was made for the principle of individual retribution. We find in several *Lingbao* scriptures unambiguous statements to that effect,[104] but most informative is a long discussion on that subject, in the form of a dialogue between Lord Dao 道君 and a Heavenly Worthy 天尊.[105] It would deserve a full translation, but here I can only indicate the general line of the argument.

The Lord Dao poses the basic question about the nature of guilt: Are the ancestor's sins visited upon their descendants? And are our own sins strictly personal, or do they implicate our ancestors? He then quotes some passages from (unnamed) scriptures that indicate that *karman* is personal

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active around 300. It is a very crude translation teeming with errors; a far better version is included in Buddhayaśa's translation of the Dīrghāgama (T 1 中阿含經, no. 30; 413 CE; no parallel in the Pāli *Dīgha Nikāya*). Later separate versions are T 24 起世經 (trsl. by Jñānagupta, second half 6th cent.) and T 25 起世因本經 (trsl. by Dharmagupta, late 6th cent.); both are based on a much more elaborate recension of this cosmological text. The theme of the three or five "divine messengers" is well-known: *Aṅguttara Nikāya* III. 35, trsl. F. L. Woodward and E. M. Hare, *Gradual Sayings*, vol. I, p. 121; *Madhyamāgama* T 26 (中阿含經, trsl. Saṅghadeva, late 4th cent.) no. 64, pp. 503a–506a; *Ekottarāgama* T 125 (增一阿含經, id.) no. 32.4, pp. 674b–676b; separate versions: T 42 鐵城泥犁經 (trsl. Dharmaratna, late 4th cent.) and T 43 閻羅王五天使者經 (trsl. Huijian 慧簡, mid.-5th cent.). Cf. also A. E. Link, "*Cheng-wu lun*: the Rectification of Unjustified Criticism", in *Oriens Extremus* 8 (1961), p. 147, note 48.

102 *Hongming ji* 弘明集. T 2102, p. 81a; Arthur E. Limk, op, cit., p. 151. In another passage (*ib.*, p. 7.3; trsl. Link p. 147) the anonymous author explicitly refers to the *Loutan jing.*

103 *Hongming ji*, T 2102, p. 37c; trsl. in *Buddhist Conquest*, pp. 168–169.

104 DZ 344 (vol. 177; *L*), p. 2[b]; DZ 347 (vol. 177; *L*), p. 1[a]; DZ 348 (vol. 177; *L*), p. 1[a]; DZ 417 (vol. 192; *L*), p. 14[b].

105 DZ 456 (vol. 202; *L*), pp. 32[b]–38[a].

and cannot be transferred. But if that is true, it follows that we cannot help our suffering ancestors either, because our good works will only benefit ourselves.

The Heavenly Worthy answers most emphatically that *karman* is a strictly individual affair: all our deeds stem from our minds (or intentions, 心), i.e. from our spirit 神. The body that is born from father and mother has nothing to do with it—in fact, they are not our real parents, but in order to repay them for their loving care we honour them and call them "father and mother". Once we are united with the Way we shall have a real
[141] body that is identical with the spirit (身神爲一) and then we shall return to our original Father-and-Mother. How could retribution then be based on such an unreal bond as parentage and blood relationship?

Actually, the Heavenly Worthy continues, the concept of inherited guilt is the result of moral degeneration. The real scriptures of highest antiquity down the beginning of the Chiming 赤明 era all proclaimed the individuality of *karman*; they knew neither of retroactive implication 上延 of ancestors nor of "downward transfer" 下流 of guilt to the descendants. Afterwards, from the end of the Chiming era to the beginning of the Shanghuang 上皇 period, people became depraved and impure, full of evil and distrust, and for that reason they became accustomed to adduce their ancestors and parents, their children and grandchildren as guarantors in swearing oaths 上引祖父下引子孫以爲證誓 when they addressed themselves to the unseen powers.[106] And when they broke those solemn covenants, the spirits could do nothing but take the guarantors and imprison them, so that the evil consequences affected the whole clan. But the intelligent disciple should never make this mistake; he should bear the full responsibility for his own *karman* and not seek to implicate others: "How could the clear and perfect ancient scriptures contain empty talk?" On the other hand, the transfer of one's own accumulated merit to others in order to save them is not only possible but even necessary, for nobody can become an Immortal without the Way of great love 大慈之道. Merit can be used to release all beings, for gods and spirits will be touched by the supplicant's true sincerity and self-denial. If all beings can profit from it, how much more then our own parents who have given birth to our bodies and nourished us with loving care?

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[106] Some explicit cases of ancestors being mentioned as "guarantors" are found in Lu Xiujing's 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀, DZ 528 (vol. 294), pp. 20[b] and 38[a].

We may conclude that regarding ideas about sin, guilt and retribution Buddhism deeply influenced Daoist thought, particularly in *Lingbao* tradition, by introducing the concept of strictly individual responsibility and personal guilt. It further immensely enriched the Daoist views concerning the after-life, at the same time creating ambiguities and contradictions in the Daoist system which at least in the scriptures studied here were not really solved.

[142] 5. *Conclusion*

After this survey and preliminary analysis of Buddhist loans we may revert to the questions posed in the introduction (above, pp. 85–86) and try to answer them on the basis of the partial conclusions drawn at the end of each section.

(1) We found a great mass of Buddhist loans of various types, ranging from the most superficial borrowing of ornamental elements to the fundamental impact of Buddhist complexes. As regards the latter category, it may be concluded that the cosmological complex borrowed from Buddhism effected an important change in the conception of ritual space; that in the field of ethics Daoism was deeply influenced by Mahāyāna universalism, and that the Buddhist complex of *karman*, retribution and rebirth brought about very important changes in the Daoist views on sin and its consequence beyond the grave, notably by stressing the individual nature of guilt. In most cases it could be assumed that there were pre-existing Daoist notions that were re-enforced and stimulated by the impact of Buddhist ideas. When dealing with "weak" borrowings of the formal and conceptual types we observed that they were completely integrated into their new context to such an extent that much of their original value was lost; in such cases Buddhism mainly served to enrich the Daoist idiom without effecting important doctrinal changes. At the level of complex borrowing, some very important new elements were introduced, some of which, such as the doctrine of *karman* and rebirth, became very influential even if it was difficult to integrate them with earlier ideas. However, it should be stressed that there always remains a hard core of specifically Daoist notions that is not affected by Buddhist influence at all. If we try to identify this hard core that basically distinguished Daoism from Buddhism in the early medieval period (an exercise that may not be superfluous in view of the still much debated question "What is Daoism?") three areas

may be distinguished: (1) the very fundamental notion of *qi* 氣 which does not play any significant role in the Buddhist representation of man and the universe; (2) consequently, the concept of bodily immortality along with all the physical and psychical operations recommended to achieve it, and (3) the ideas that texts as such are quintessential things in themselves, and consequently the whole complex of esoteric transmission and
[143] secret initiation associated with it.

(2) The selection of Buddhist loans shows a very clear pattern: there is an obvious concentration of borrowings from the three complexes of cosmology (including ideas about the pantheon), morality, and *karman*-and-retribution. Outside these three, relatively few loans are found, and they are all of the "weak" type. If we consider the nature of the "strong" loans, as well as a number of features which we observed again and again in various sections, there can be little doubt about the explanation of this distribution. We observed, in fact: (a) the absence of borrowings from some very important types of Buddhist "specialized" literature, notably the huge areas of scholastics and monastic discipline; (b) a certain preference for miraculous and picturesque (or even "exotic") features; (c) a superficial and often quite distorted image of Buddhism; (d) the use of only very common terms that cannot be traced to one particular Buddhist scripture or selection of scriptures because they belong to a kind of "basic Buddhist vocabulary", and (e) a marked influence and correct representation of basic ethical formulas such as the "five vows," the "ten good works," and elements derived from the "Bodhisattva vow". In view of all this, the conclusion is obvious: Daoism was not influenced by "professional" Buddhism, but through the distorting and simplifying filter of *lay* Buddhism; we must assume that the human contacts which formed the channel of transmission must not be sought in the monasteries or the *qingtan* 清談 salons where learned monks were present to explain the doctrine (notably that of Emptiness, which, as we have seen, is signally absent), but rather in lay society where Daoists and Buddhist devotees met, perhaps even as members of one and the same family. Of course this conclusion should be tested by confronting it with evidence from other sources (a test that falls outside the scope of this study), but in any case all evidence we have assembled here firmly points in that direction.

(3) It has become abundantly clear that the lion's share of Buddhist loans of all types and levels is concentrated in the scriptures of the *Lingbao*

tradition. At this stage it is difficult to explain this remarkable phenomenon. However, if we compare the whole world-view that is set forth in *Lingbao* scriptures with that of other traditions, we find some typical features such as a great emphasis on moral rules and a certain aversion
[144] from outward forms of ritual and magic by which this system *as a whole* shows much greater affinity with Buddhist views than is found in other Daoist traditions. This could mean that *Lingbao* Daoism already at the beginning, in its formative stage, was exposed to strong Buddhist influence (or even owed its very existence to Buddho-Daoist crossbreeding). This, of course, only means shifting the problem one stage back, to the late fourth century, when the earliest body of *Lingbao* scriptures is supposed to have taken shape. That date may, however, be significant, if we consider the fact that the *Lingbao* tradition came into being as a reaction against the other major southern Daoist movement, that of the Maoshan revelations that only had started a few decades earlier. If, as has been brilliantly demonstrated by Michel Strickmann,[107] the latter essentially was an indigenous reaction of the southern aristocracy against the invaders from the north and their ideology, it may be useful to point out that Buddhism, too, was mainly brought to the lower Yangzi regions by refugees from northern China. This may explain why we find so little evidence of Buddhist influence in the original corpus of Maoshan scriptures, and also how its most successful rival, the *Lingbao* movement, could establish its own identity by eagerly absorbing the Buddhist elements rejected by its opponent.

(4) The question whether the presence or absence (or, in the first case, the quantity and nature) of Buddhist loans in a Daoist scripture allows us to draw conclusions as to its date is very difficult to answer, for there are many obscuring and complicating factors that must be taken into account. In the first place, outside the *Lingbao* texts the rarity of Buddhist loans cannot always be interpreted as evidence for an early date, because there are texts (e.g. the new rules introduced by Kou Qianzhi, DZ 785, vol. 562 老君音誦誡經) which are known to be rather late and yet only show very slight traces of Buddhist influence. In such cases, as also the works of Tao Hongjing, the near-absence of Buddhist terminology may stem from

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[107] Michel Strickmann, "The Mao-shan Revelations: Daoism and the Aristocracy", *T'oung Pao* 63, 1977, pp. 1–64.

a conscious "puristic" effort to exclude alien elements. But apart from the latter possibility (which perhaps can also be isolated by other means), Buddhist loans may indeed within certain limits be useful as criteria for dating. The first possibility is to look for "marginal" borrowings of the
[145] most common type, which in fact only comprise four elements: the terms 劫, 十方, 魔, and remarkably, the expression 五苦八難. They occur in most scriptures of all sects, and their inclusion into the Daoist vocabulary must be very old indeed. The *absence* of any of such *most common* loans may be an indication of a very early age (of course to be used along with other criteria, and never as the only argument). But the statement should be further qualified, for there are texts which on account of their very nature (e.g. lists of recipes, or *fu* with explanation) do not easily lend themselves to the use of this type of terminology—after all, one does not look for Bible quotations in the *Larousse culinaire.* We should always consider in how far a given text would potentially lend itself to the inclusion of Buddhist loans. If, for instance, we have a long text containing passages of a discursive nature dealing with things like sin and retribution, eras, rules of moral behaviour, and various kinds of supernatural beings, it seems very probable indeed that the absence of even marginal Buddhist terminology is an indication of an early date—it is in my opinion one of the strongest arguments for regarding the *Taiping jing* as a genuine Han work.

The second remark to be made is that *within* the *Lingbao* tradition with its abundance of Buddhist borrowings the relative frequency and nature of such elements can be used as one of the criteria for dating a text, because in the literature of that sect, which apparently was exposed to continuous Buddhist influence, we may assume that the process has been a cumulative one. It is probably not a coincidence that a text commonly regarded as one of the oldest *Lingbao* scriptures, DZ 338 (vol. 183) 太上靈寶五符序, only shows very marginal traces of Buddhist influence; on the basis of this criterium, DZ 330 (vol. 167) 太上洞玄靈寶眞文要解上經 would be a close second.

(5) Our final question concerned Buddhism itself: to what extent can the analysis of Buddhist borrowings in Daoism teach us something about mediaeval Chinese Buddhism that we do not know from other sources? The answer must be that in two ways it does yield valuable information.

One of the great problems in the study of early Chinese Buddhism is that we know too much about it—as far as the canonical scriptures are concerned. Of some *sūtras* we know that they were very popular

and had a wide circulation, but there are hundreds of texts containing [146] innumerable points of doctrine, of which we cannot measure the actual impact. Many may have been obscure texts with hardly any circulation, surviving in some remote corner, eventually to be saved by their inclusion in the printed canon. In other words: the actual impact is difficult to measure. The selection of Buddhist ideas, particularly at the level of complex borrowing that we find in Daoist literature, gives a very valuable clue as to what ideas were the "focal points" in Buddhism with the strongest appeal—so strong that they could influence Chinese thought beyond the limits of the Buddhist community and be accepted by its greatest rival.

But if we agree with the conclusion drawn above, that Daoism in fact got its Buddhist impulses from lay Buddhism, the information is even more valuable. We actually know very little about that sector of Buddhist religion in mediaeval China. Apart from a handful of documents of unequal value (the most important being Xi Chao's "catechism") and, of course, the epigraphical materials, our main source of information consists of the monks' biographies. Such biographies teem with the names of illustrious laics, but they hardly indicate the scope and nature of their beliefs—after all, the *Gaoseng zhuan* is largely a work of religious propaganda intended to show the "respectability" of the church in terms of learning and high connections, and the dozens of ministers, governors and courtiers swarming around any famous monk are described as status objects rather than as devotees. It could well be that a more detailed analysis of Buddhist complexes as mirrored in Daoist literature could teach us much about contemporary lay Buddhism, in spite of all misunderstandings and distortions.

But perhaps such misunderstandings and distortions were also widely spread among the simple Buddhist believers themselves. Perhaps we are—as so often happens—handicapped by the fact that we can only observe Buddhism and Daoism at the very highest level, that of the religious "professionals" and their written texts—the tops of two pyramids. We may consider the possibility that at a lower level the bodies of the pyramids merged into a much less differentiated lay religion, and that at the very base both systems largely dissolved into an indistinct mass of popular beliefs and practices.

In that sense—quite different from the one intended by the unknown author of the *Santian neijie jing*—we may agree that, indeed, the two teachings are 'two branches springing from a single trunk'.

[147] *Daoist Scriptures Quoted or Referred to*

Nr.	Vol. & Sect.	(L = *Lingbao*; *S* = *Shangqing*; *T* = *Tianshi*)
1	1; L.	靈寶無量度人上品妙經 (j. I only).
22	26; L.	元始五老赤書玉篇眞文天書經
23	26; L.	太上諸天靈書度命妙經
33	27; S.	上清黃氣陽精三道順行經
55	30; S.	高上太霄琅書瓊文帝章經
97	49; L.	太上靈寶諸天內音自然玉字
177	77; L.	太上洞眞智慧上品大誡
318	165; L.	洞玄靈寶自然九天生神章經
325	167; L.	太上洞玄靈寶智慧定志通微經
330	167; L.	太上洞玄靈寶眞文要解上經
344	177; L.	太上洞玄靈寶智慧本願大戒上品經
346	177; L.	太上洞玄靈寶眞一勸誡法輪妙經
347	177; L.	太上玄一眞人說妙通轉神入定經
348	177; L.	太上玄一眞人說勸誡法輪妙經
352	178; L.	太上洞玄靈寶赤書玉訣妙經
354	179; S.	上清三元玉檢三元布經
369	181; L.	太上洞玄靈寶滅度五錬生尸妙經
388	183; L.	太上靈寶五符序
405	191; S.	上清紫精君皇初紫靈道君洞房上經
417	192; L.	太上大道三元品誡謝罪上法
425	194; L.	上清太極隱注玉經寶訣
455	202; L.	太上玄一眞人說三途五苦勸戒經
456	202; L.	太上洞玄靈寶三元品戒功德輕重經
457	202; L.	太上洞玄靈寶智慧罪根上品大戒經
532	295; L.	太極眞人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣
615	335–336; T.	赤松子章曆
639	342; S.	皇天上清金闕帝君靈書紫文上經
671	352; L.	太上無極大道自然眞一五稱符上經
785	562; T.	老君音誦戒經
786	562; T.	太上老君經律
789	563; T.	正一法文天師教戒科經
1114	758; L.	太上洞玄靈寶本行宿緣經
1115	758; L.	太上洞玄靈寶本行因緣經
1205	876; T.	三天內解經
1243	991; T.	正一法文太上外籙儀
1314	1026; S.	洞眞太上素靈洞元大有妙經
1322	1028; S.	洞眞太上八素眞經三五行化妙訣
1329	1029; T.	太上九赤班符五帝內眞經
1331	1030; S.	洞眞上清神州七轉七變舞天經
1344	1032; S.	洞眞太上說智慧消魔眞經
1345	1032; S.	洞眞太上道君元円上經
1347	1033; S.	洞眞太上上清內經
1365	1039; S.	上清元始譜錄太眞玉訣
1367	1040; S.	上清河圖內玄經
1373	1041; S.	上清外國放品青童內文
1407	1051; L.	洞玄靈寶二十四生圖經
1411	1052; L.	洞玄靈寶長夜之府九幽玉匱明眞科
1439	1059; L.	洞玄靈寶玉京山步虛經

ESCHATOLOGY AND MESSIANISM IN EARLY CHINESE BUDDHISM

Our subject takes us to the fifth and sixth centuries of our era, the latter part of the Nanbei-chao period, and it deals with a particular type of what may be called "Buddho-Daoist hybridization"—a complex of beliefs, expectations, and cultic practices that in itself can neither be called specifically Buddhist nor Daoist, but is the result of a complete merger of elements taken from the two major traditions that by that time had come to dominate religious life in China.

By that time both Buddhism and religious Daoism had passed through a development of nearly half a millenium; both had spread all over China, and both had grown into complex and highly diversified systems. In religious Daoism, the three major movements—the more popular (or at least more collectivistic) creed of the Heavenly Masters 天師 with its local parishes and communal ceremonies that had its roots in the organized Daoism of the Late Han, and the more individualized and aristocratic Maoshan 茅山 and Lingbao 靈寶 movements that had arisen in the fourth century—had crystallized into distinct currents, each with its own pantheon and its own ever-expanding body of revealed scriptures. In Chinese Buddhism, the introduction of new and sometimes startling ideas from abroad was going on, both in the "barbarian" north and in the territory of the southern dynasties. But towards the end of the Nanbei-chao period an important reorientation was taking place. In the course of the preceding five centuries an enormous and very heterogeneous mass of Buddhist ideas had become known in China, and it was their very profusion and bewildering diversity (or even contradictoriness) that called for a radical "restructuring" of Buddhism as a whole. This could be done in various ways: by reintegrating all known Buddhist teachings into a new super-system of "graded truth", or by a reductionist approach stressing devotionalism as a direct way to salvation, or even by rejecting all traditional teachings and outward forms of Buddhism in favour of a doctrine of good works based on the belief in an all-pervading Buddha-nature. All this was
[35] an internal Chinese affair, in which foreign masters virtually played no role. The stage was dominated by Chinese preachers and theologians who

elaborated the doctrinal principles and religious practices that were to inspire the first purely Chinese Buddhist schools, and, at the popular level, the first known sectarian movements in Chinese Buddhism.

In many cases the new beliefs could no more be justified on the basis of authentic Buddhist scriptures, and it is certainly no coincidence that in the late Nanbei-chao period many dozens of popular apocryphal texts were produced—a vast body of religious literature, in which Buddhist and indigenous (notably Daoist) elements were freely combined and amalgamated. As we shall see, most of these apocrypha have disappeared as the result of centuries of clerical censorship and repression. The few texts that have been spared are extremely valuable, as they show us a glimpse of the other side of Chinese Buddhism, far removed from the products of the clerical establishment, the state-sponsored translation projects, the scriptural studies of scholar-monks, the biographical and bibliographical compilations—in short: the bulk of the Buddhist Canon that in spite of its enormous size mainly reflects the activities of a tiny elite. It is outside this great scriptural and exegetical tradition of Chinese Buddhism, in a number of apocryphal texts,[1] that we find the clearest examples of the amalgamation of the two religious traditions, or, as I have called it, of "Buddho-Daoist hybridization". In general, apocrypha of this type are of the poorest quality; stylistically and doctrinally they lack all sophistication. They address themselves to a simple public, probably mainly consisting of lay believers—the same circles that, as I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere,[2] formed the main channel through which Buddhist elements were absorbed into Daoism.

This is, indeed, a point of great importance for our understanding of Chinese Buddhism as a whole. Much research has been done either on Chinese Buddhism or on religious Daoism, but little attention has so far been paid to their interrelation. It is, however, evident that the two traditions did not grow up in isolation. At every level, from the village parish to the imperial court, they coexisted, in a situation of both rivalry and mutual
[36] interaction. Unfortunately, our knowledge of this zone of interaction and overlapping is restricted due to the fact that, in general, our information belongs to the great tradition of Chinese Buddhism, maintained by a religious elite that naturally tended to emphasize the exclusive doctrinal

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[1] For a survey of Chinese Buddhist apocryphal scriptures see the introductory part (pp. 1–95) of Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮, *Gikyō kenkyū* 疑經研究, Kyōto, 1977.

[2] "Buddhist Influence on Early Daoism: A Survey of Scriptural Evidence", *T'oung Pao* 66 (1980), pp. 84–147, esp. p. 143.

identity of its own system. Whatever remains of Buddhist apocryphal literature bears witness to the fact that at a lower level, and particularly among lay believers, the dividing lines become blurred, and it may well be that still further down, at the illiterate level which now is forever beyond our reach, the two traditions completely merged, like the hidden body of an ice-berg of which we only see the two separate tips. Our subject, and the phenomenon of "Buddho-Daoist hybrids" in general, takes us to that intermediate zone of fusion and overlapping that, after all, may have been more representative of Chinese Buddhism as a whole than the more sophisticated texts of the great tradition would make us believe.

The combination of eschatology and messianism that forms the subject of this article can briefly be defined as a complex of beliefs and expectations concerning the end of our world (usually represented as a scene of violence and destruction) through the action of superhuman powers, coupled with the appearance of a saviour whose nature is clearly defined as divine, or at least as belonging to a superhuman level of existence. It cannot be doubted that such a complex of beliefs had developed in certain Daoist circles in early medieval times. In this introductory section we can only summarize the main themes as we find them in a number of Daoist scriptures.[3]

The basic assumption underlying the Daoist belief in cosmic crises is
[37] the cyclical conception of time: the idea that the physical universe passes through a number of longer and shorter cycles of different length that take place at the same time. Periodically this complicated process will reach a nodal point (a "conjunction" 會 or "completion" 周), when the beginning of several cycles coincide. In early Daoist texts, probably already since the third century,[4] we find the first traces of the belief that at such nodal

[3] Notably in the following scriptures: 太平經鈔, 甲部 (late Tang summary of a sixth century Shangqing 上淸 redaction of the *Taiping jing*), ed. Wang Ming 王明, T*aiping jing hejiao* 太平經合校, Peking, 1960, pp. 1–5; DZ 23 (numbering according to K. M. Schipper, *Concordance du Tao-tsang*) 太上諸天寶書度命妙經; DZ 322 太上靈寶天地運度自然妙經; DZ 335: 太上洞淵神呪經 DZ 442 上淸後聖道君列紀; DZ 1032 雲笈七籤 j. 2 p. 7[b], quoting the original 上淸三天正法經; DZ 1195 老君變化無極經; Anna K. Seidel, "The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Daoist Messianism: Lao-tzu and Li Hong", *History of Religions* 9 (1969–1970), pp. 216–247; K. M. Schipper, "Millénarismes of Messianismes dans la Chine ancienne", in *Understanding Modern China, Proceedings of the XXVIth Conference of Chinese Studies, European Association of Chinese Studies,* Rome, 1979, pp. 31–49.

[4] Cf. DZ 1168 太上老君中經, section 52: shorter and longer cycles, combined with the periodic appearances of Sages 賢人, Saints 聖人, and Perfected Ones 眞人. The end of a cycle of 3,600,000 years is marked by a Great Conjunction 大會 of heaven and earth, when everything is reduced to an indistinct, chaotic state.

points in time the world will be stricken by cosmic disasters, and that at that moment a Saint will appear to save a small minority of *electi* from the cataclysm.

As is to be expected in prophetic literature, the date of the coming catastrophe is defined in a quasi-exact way, either by means of cyclical signs, or by indicating the number of years that have passed since a certain fixed date. Thus, the destruction is said to start in the year *renwu* 壬午 (382?; 442?); a deluge will cover the earth, demons will cause epidemics, even sun and moon will disappear. Then, in the year *renchen* 壬辰 (392?; 452?), or, according to another definition, 2,760 years after Yao's accession to the throne, the messiah Li Hong 李弘 will appear.

In all cases the massacre performed by supernatural beings appears to be an essential theme in this drama. Huge armies of demons led by spirit-generals are set loose upon mankind to exterminate the sinners with slaughter and pestilence; sometimes the minority of *electi* is protected by other superhuman armies that are sent down to defend them. In addition, the world is devastated by natural disasters, particularly by a deluge.

The saviour, who is clearly represented as a superhuman being (an Immortal, or the manifestation of a god) does not operate alone. He is assisted by other powers: Saints who are leading a hidden life in the world of man, and there prepare his advent.

The cataclysm takes the character of an apocalyptic judgment, by which the "chosen people" 種民[5] are separated from the mass of sinners
[38] and moved to safe places. Just as the cosmic crisis itself appears to be provoked by both objective and subjective factors and conditions (being represented, on the one hand, as a cyclical phenomenon that is bound to happen, and, on the other, as the cosmic response to moral degeneration), the texts contain contradictory statements about the nature of the "chosen people": their number is said to be fixed, as their salvation is the result of predestination, but at the same time the prophecies should be made widely known and people should be urged to repent and convert themselves, so that as many souls as possible may be saved.

Finally, the *electi* are herded together in a region of perfect bliss, splendour, and longevity, ruled by a saintly king who in some cases is the

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[5] The term *zhongmin* is enigmatic. *Zhong* probably here means "(to plant =) to establish", hence "those (whose salvation) is firmly established, or secured" (cf. TT 442 p. 4b: 種善人, 除殘民).

messiah himself; in other cases a distinction appears to be made between the saintly monarch and his divine inspirator.

We must now turn to the "original" Buddhist heritage (i.e. Buddhism as it was presented to the Chinese from abroad) and try to define, firstly, what themes in some way or another refer to the basic elements of the eschatological-messianic complex (i.e. the end of the world; the destruction of sinners; the appearance of a Saviour, the salvation of "chosen people"; the reintegration of the world after the cataclysm), and, secondly, to what extent such themes that were part of the Buddhist heritage may be said to form a coherent complex, a true apocalypse, as is found in the Chinese indigenous tradition. If we try to inventorize this original "Buddhist input", we can define at least five themes that appear to be relevant.

(1) The cyclical conception of time coupled with the belief in the periodic destruction of our universe. At the end of each Great Aeon (*mahākalpa, dajie* 大劫, i.e. a sequence of shorter, but still unimaginably lengthy aeons that form smaller cycles of growth and decay) the physical universe is destroyed by the three "*kalpa*-disasters" of water, fire, and wind; this is followed by an intermediate period of emptiness and darkness, after which a new "receptacle-world" starts to evolve again by the collective force of the *karman* of all beings.[6] It is to be
[39] noted that those beings have not been destroyed along with the universe; before the catastrophes have started, they have been reborn in the highest heavens that remain intact. The dissolution of the physical world is therefore not coupled with any kind of final judgment, and when the new universe has taken shape, it is pretty much the same old world, and certainly not a New Jerusalem, The everlasting mechanism of *karman* and retribution goes on, as a linear process unaffected by any cyclical movement.

(2) Mahāyāna scriptures contain various kinds of prophesies, two types of which appear to be relevant to our subject. The first one to be mentioned here is the well-known *vyākaraṇa* (*shouji* 授記) formula, by which the Buddha foretells someone's religious career in future lives, culminating in the recipient's achievement of Buddhahood. The

6 The main source through which the Chinese were acquainted with Buddhist cosmology in early medieval times was the First version of the very popular *Lokadhātu-sūtra*, T 23 大樓炭經, translated by Bo Fali 帛法立 and Bo Faju 帛法炬 around 300 CE. A detailed account of the destruction of the world is found on pp. 302c–305a of that version.

moment at which an individual "receives the Prediction" naturally marks a decisive point in his career as a Bodhisattva. But even more important is a curious type of prediction that is found in a great number of scriptural and scholastic texts: the prophecy, made by the Buddha himself, about the future decay and final disappearance of the Doctrine—a pessimistic view that was elaborated into a scheme of three phases, starting with the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa. The first period, that of the True Doctrine (*saddharma, zhengfa* 正法), is to be followed by a phase of "Counterfeit Doctrine" (*saddharmapratirūpaka, xiangfa* 像法) characterized by moral decay and sectarianism; finally, in the third stage called "the End of the Doctrine" (*saddharmavipralopa, mofa* 末法), even the semblance of religious life is lost, and the world will be a place of sin and ignorance until the next Buddha appears to restore the *Dharma*. As we shall see, both types of prophesy were destined to play an important part in the development of Chinese Buddhist eschatology. On the other hand it should be noted that predictions concerning the end of the world (and its "*kalpa*-disasters", cf. sub (1) above) do not play any significant part in the non-Chinese Buddhist tradition.

(3) The appearance of such an Enlightened One is a happening of utmost rarity, but it is not unique. Before Śākyamuni there have been countless Buddhas, and he will have innumerable successors, among whom
[40] Maitreya (Mile 彌勒) stands out, simply because he is the next in line. He is at present dwelling in the Tuṣita heaven preparing his descent, which will take place after several millions of years, in a period of great prosperity, when the world is ruled by a Universal Monarch.

(4) The figure of Maitreya is one of the few advanced Bodhisattvas around whom a body of religious lore had grown up, and who consequently have become more or less individualized. But apart from these, Mahāyāna-Buddhism has peopled the universe with innumerable less distinct Bodhisattvas—saintly figures who may manifest themselves anywhere and in all possible forms for the benefit of all beings. It has, as it were, created an immense "reservoir of saviours", an enormous potential for mythological elaboration. In the same way, Buddhism supplied a counterpart to these forces of salvation by its conception of the god Māra (Mo 魔) represented as the personification of evil and as the leader of a monstrous army, and by introducing an extensive demonology, ranging from the "Titans" (Asura) of semi-divine status to the pitiful "hungry ghosts" (*preta*) and other sub-human beings.

(5) If Mahāyāna Buddhism does not recognize any form of final judgment, it certainly contains certain notions that resemble the segregation of pious believers in a region of bliss. Rebirth as a god, and particularly in the Tuṣita heaven that is described in great detail as a sphere of both spiritual and sensual pleasures,[7] is the fruit of merit accumulated in human life, and the same holds good of rebirth in one of the numerous "Buddha-worlds" outside our universe. And even in this life the devotee is able to "visualize" (*guan* 觀), by certain forms of mental concentration, the wonders that await him there.

All these themes no doubt contain some elements that are relevant to our subject, and they all came to play a significant role, by way of "building materials", in the emerging Chinese Buddhist eschatology. However, we must conclude that they by no means form a coherent vision; on the contrary: they are disparate clusters of beliefs that have developed independently and not seldom contradict each other. In spite of its dramatic character, the destruction of our universe is not coupled with moral
[41] degeneration, nor with divine judgment, and it does not even affect the karmic destiny of sentient beings. The *mofa* period is one of moral decay, but it has no connection with the "*kalpa*-disasters". Maitreya will reach Buddhahood in a very distant future, in a situation of peace and prosperity, and not at the time of a cosmic crisis. The Bodhisattva protects and saves individual beings, as an expression of his own perfect detachment and as a means to further their spiritual advancement—he is neither willing nor able to save the world as such. It cannot be doubted that in the development of a Buddhist eschatological-messianic complex in the late Nanbei-chao period, Daoism provided the model for the structure as a whole, and also added some essential themes that had no counterpart in the Buddhist heritage at all: the apocalyptic battle, the judgment, and the creation of an ideal world.

However, the raw materials supplied by Buddhism had to be cut to size before they could become part of such a structure: the disparate themes listed above had to undergo drastic reinterpretation before they could be brought together into a single apocalyptic vision.

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7 Cf. the exuberant description of the beauties and delights of the various heavens in T 23 (see preceding note), pp. 294a–296c.

One of the most interesting developments in the digestion and transformation of such themes concerns the Chinese speculations about the beginning of the *mofa*—the final stage of degeneration in which the way of salvation would disappear altogether. It is well-known that this idea—which in the original Buddhist heritage plays a rather insignificant role—made a very deep impression on Chinese believers, and largely inspired the rise and early development of important schools in Chinese Buddhism, notably those of a "reductionist" type that preached a simple and direct way to salvation suited to a degenerate age. In a wider sense, it also stimulated criticism on the established *saṅgha*: it is no coincidence that texts describing the evils of the *mofa* invariably concentrate upon the abuses and sinful ways of the Buddhist clergy itself. But the idea that the world was about to reach that stage, or perhaps had already entered it, also had its political implications, as the *mofa* period is, not only characterised by general immorality and natural disasters, but also by a government that is cruel and corrupt, suppressing its subjects, and meting out heavy and arbitrary punishments. Any statements to the effect that the *mofa* period was at hand automatically implied a condemnation of the establishment, both ecclesiastical and political.

[42] In this light we must see the Chinese speculations concerning the chronology of the "three stages"—various systems of computation, all of which took as starting-point the date of the Buddha's decease, but which nevertheless showed considerable variation, because there were widely different theories both about the date of the *Parinirvāṇa* and about the length of each of the three stages. For the *Parinirvāṇa* a late sixth century source lists no less than seven differing dates, ranging from 1173 to 467 BCE;[8] at that time at least five periodization schemes for the three stages were current, according to which the *mofa* phase was to begin, respectively, 700, 880, 1,000, 1,500, or 2,000 years after the Buddha's decease.[9] Needless to say that in official sources we generally find the tendency to

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[8] Fei Changfang 費長房, in T 2034 歷代三寶記 (597 CE), j. 1. p. 25a.

[9] For a survey of the various traditions concerning the three stages in Indian Buddhism see Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Louvain, 1967, pp. 210–222; j. Przyluski, *La légende de l'Empereur Açoka dans les textes indiens et chinois*, Paris, 1925, esp. ch. VII; L. de la Vallée Poussin, *Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, Paris, 1925, vol. V, pp. 219–221. Apart from the common schemes using multiples of 500, we also find other constructions: a gradual degeneration in ten stages, each stage lasting one century (T 390 佛臨涅槃記法住經, trsl. Xuanzang); three phases lasting, respectively, 80, 800, and 8,000 years (T 245, the apocryphal 仁王般若波羅蜜經 wrongly attributed to Kumārajīva); destruction of the Doctrine by Māra after 700 years, in the three versions of the (Mahāyāna) *Parinirvāṇa-sūtra* (T 374; j. 7 p. 402a; T 375, j. 7, p. 643b; T 376, j. 4 p. 880a).

move that fateful date forward into a comfortably distant future, and, consequently, to condemn the idea of "*mofa* now" as heretical. This could be done because the combination of various theories, both concerning the *Parinirvāṇa* and the length of the first two stages, yielded such a great number of possible dates for the inception of the *mofa* phase that almost any statement could be justified. I shall not go into the details of this complicated subject, which I propose to treat elsewhere. It should, however, be pointed out that as far as the Nanbei-chao period is concerned, two dates are very significant 392 CE and 550 CE. The second date coincides with the upsurge of *mofa* belief that played an important role in the formation of new movements in Chinese Buddhism. But even more striking is the fact that 392 CE, one of the possible dates for the beginning of the *mofa* period, is a *ren-chen* year—and probably the one in which in Daoist circles the messiah Li Hong was expected to appear![10]

[43] This would suggest an original combination of themes unknown in the Buddhist scriptural tradition, for although the various schemes of periodisation for the three phases do occur in authentic Buddhist texts, we never find there the idea that at that critical moment a saviour is to appear. And, indeed, there are clear signs that such a combination was made in China, notably by a basic reinterpretation of one of the Buddhist themes mentioned above: the coming of the next Buddha, Maitreya. As we have seen, Maitreya's advent was normally expected to take place after an inconceivable number of years, and in an era of peace and opulence.[11] The available evidence shows that the Maitreya devotionalism that flourished in China in the late Nanbei-chao period generally was of this orthodox, "harmless" type. However, there are also traces of another, "alternative" Maitreya belief in which messianic and eschatological notions appear to have played an important role. The basic change consisted in a chronological shift, as a result of which the coming of Maitreya was transferred

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[10] Since the calculation is based on a fixed date in Chinese recorded history (in this case the eighth day of the fourth month of the tenth year of the Zhou king Zhuang, cf. my *Buddhist Conquest*, p. 272), this *ren-chen* year was also fixed in time and could not be altered. It would therefore be tempting to suppose that the corresponding Daoist prediction was based on the Buddhist computation.

[11] The theme of Maitreya's future incarnation 下生 is described in several versions of a text that in its canonical (Hīnayāna) form is found in *Ekottarāgama* (T 125 增一阿含, trsl. Saṅghadeva, late 4th cent.) j. 44.3, pp. 787c–789c (literally reproduced in T 453 彌勒下生經, wrongly attributed to Dharmarakṣa): T 454 彌勒下生成佛經 (probably 5th cent.); T 456 彌勒大成佛經 (trsl. by Kumārajīva, early 5th cent.), and T 457 彌勒來時經 (anon., 5th cent.). According to the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, T 1545, j. 135, p. 698b, Maitreya will appear in this world after 576 million years.

from an era of prosperity and happiness in a very distant future to an imminent period of decay and misery, associated with the *mofa*. In this way, Maitreya came to assume truly messianic features.

However, the *mofa* era in Buddhist canonical tradition merely is a period of suffering and ignorance—it is not an eschatological situation, a prelude to the end of the world. The original combination of *mofa* with the theme of the "*kalpa*-disasters" at the end of an aeon (i.e. the violent destruction of our universe coupled with, and resulting from, the moral degeneration of mankind—a combination that, as we have seen, was never made in the original Buddhist heritage) forms a third and decisive step in the formation of a Chinese Buddhist eschatology.

[44] Thus the three originally disparate themes: the extinction of the Doctrine; the advent of Maitreya, and the final cataclysm, combined to form a new and explosive type of popular belief. The cosmic crisis, heralded in the present by countless signs of clerical corruption, political chaos, and natural disasters, is brought within view; Maitreya is transformed from a benign Teacher into a powerful saviour who rescues the true believers from the impending holocaust.

We may assume that such beliefs inspired the first distinctively Buddhist rebellions of the late fifth century that are mentioned—unfortunately without any further details—in historical sources,[12] as they continued to inspire subversive movements till modern times. However, much more specific—if extremely fragmentary—information is yielded by the Buddhist bibliographies since the sixth century, in which quite a number of titles of "heretical" Maitreya scriptures are listed. Those titles clearly show this alternative Maitreya in his eschatological role: "separating the sinners from the blessed"; "saving (the devotees) from suffering and danger"; "rescuing (them) from the three catastrophes of the great *kalpa*-holocaust"; and "overcoming the demons".[13] It goes without saying that the official, state-sponsored compilers of the bibliographies only listed the titles by way of "warning example", in their comments they condemn such apocrypha as spurious, extravagant, heretical, and subversive, and they explicitly urge their complete destruction. In this case, the repression has been

[12] For the "Buddhist rebels" of this period see the detailed account by Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆 in his *Shina bukkyōshi kenkyū* 支那佛教史研究 (*Hoku-Gi hen* 北魏篇), Tokyo, 1942; for the later "Maitreya rebels' see Shigematsu Toshiaki 重松俊章, "Tō-Sō jidai no Miroku kyōhi" 唐宋時代の彌勒教匪, in *Shi'en* 史淵 3, 1931, pp. 68–103.

[13] Cf. the titles of apocryphal Maitreya scriptures preserved in T 2146 衆經目錄 j. 2, p. 126c; T 2153 大周刊定衆經目錄 j. 15, p. 474a–b, and T 2154 開元釋教錄 j. 2, p. 126c.

successful, for these apocryphal Maitreya scriptures never were included in the Buddhist Canon, and most of them have disappeared completely. However, in this respect the Dunhuang manuscripts have again proved their unique value as a vast body of materials beyond the reach of clerical censorship, and, consequently, a treasure-house of Buddhist apocrypha.
[45] As we shall see, it has yielded at least one complete text dealing with Maitreya in a clearly apocalyptic context.

However, Maitreya was not the only potential Messiah. As we have seen above, Mahāyāna Buddhism had presented the Chinese with an enormous mass of religious and mythological lore, much of which could be integrated into the emerging messianic-eschatological complex. If the Daoist prototype included, as one of its essential parts, the apocalyptic battle between the forces of good and evil, Māra and his monstrous armies were ready to play the latter role, assisted by a choice of other fearful beings, and the ranks of their adversaries could be filled with those figures who in Buddhist tradition were represented as the protectors of the Doctrine and of all true believers: the Four Heavenly Kings; the gods of the higher heavens, and the countless Bodhisattvas of the "ten directions of space". The glory of the Tuṣita heaven with its splendid architecture, its sensual pleasures and its long-lived inhabitants could easily become associated with the perfect state of the *electi* in the Daoist scheme. The Daoist practice of auto-hypnotic concentration in order to evoke a visual image of an internal or external deity in order to control its power found its counterpart in the Buddhist practice of "visualisation", just as the *dhāraṇī*, written in pseudo-Sanskrit,[14] could play the role of the Daoist protective spells. In view of the extent and variety of the materials available, it is not surprising that, apart from Maitreya, other saintly figures from Mahāyāna lore could also be made to assume messianic features. The most interesting case of such a transformation is that of a rather obscure Bodhisattva called Yueguang tongzi 月光童子 (Candraprabha-kumāra), or "Prince Moonlight". It is in various ways a very instructive example. In the first place it very clearly illustrates the mechanism of recentration and recombination in cultural borrowing, for it shows how an element that in the non-Chinese Buddhist tradition plays an absolutely insignificant part can be selected, highlighted, surrounded by a cluster of other elements, and so made into the centre of a new complex. Secondly, it also illus-

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[14] The same kind of Sanskrit-like gibberish that is often found in Daoist texts, cf. my article mentioned in note 2 above, pp. 107–112.

trates the ambivalent role of Chinese Buddhist prophecy (and, indeed, of prophetic texts in general). In some cases, such as the apocalyptic state-
[46] ments described above, they may be called at least potentially subversive, as they are based on the assumption that the world is lost, and the existing order is bound to be destroyed. However, in other cases Buddhist prophecies, particularly those of the *vyākaraṇa* type (cf. above, p. 39), are used to support the powers that be, the temporal ruler being represented as a manifestation of a Bodhisattva. As we shall see, Yueguang tongzi has been made to play both roles in the course of his remarkable career in China: as a Saviour amidst the horrors of the last Judgment, and as an ideal ruler on the dragon throne.

Apart from the mere mentioning of his name in some Mahāyāna scriptures, Candraprabha-kumāra is best known by his role in a short *sūtra* that has been preserved in several Chinese versions, translated between the late third and the late sixth century.[15] They contain, in various degrees of elaboration, the same pious story, in which the young Yueguang remonstrates with his misguided father Śrīgupta who, incited by heretics, tries to murder the Buddha by letting the latter fall into a fire-pit. The plot fails, for the Buddha miraculously changes the fire-pit into a lotus pond, and Śrīgupta, deeply ashamed, is converted. In the original Indian text the emphasis is on Śrīgupta's plot, the miracle, and the conversion; Yueguang's attempt to change his father's mind only plays a minor role in the story. However, in two of the extant Chinese versions the story is followed by a *vyākaraṇa* passage in which the Buddha utters a prophecy concerning Yueguang's future lives, and the content of these two predictions clearly show that we have to do with apocryphal interpolations of Chinese origin. In both cases, Yueguang is associated with the *mofa* period, with holy kingship, and with China.

In the anonymous *Shenrijing* (T 535, probably fifth century), the Buddha tells Ānanda;

> A thousand years after my *Parinirvāṇa*, when the canonical Doctrine 經法 is about to be broken off, (this) Yueguang tongzi will appear in China 秦國 to be a saintly ruler. He will obtain my canonical Doctrine and splendidly
> [47] revive the work of religious transformation. The inhabitants of China as well as its border states—those of Lob Nor, Udyāna, Kucha, Kashgar, Ferghana

[15] T 534 月光童子經, trsl. by Dharmarakṣa (late 3rd cent.); T 535 申日經 (anon.; probably 5th cent.); T 536 申日兒本經 (trsl. by Guṇabhadra, ca 440 CE); T 545 德護長者經 (trsl. by Narendrayaśas in 583 CE). In addition, the successive Buddhist bibliographies mention several other versions that are said to have been lost at an early date.

> and Khotan, and (even) the Qiang caitiffs 羌虜 and the Yi and Di 夷狄 barbarians—all will venerate the Buddha and observe his Doctrine, and everywhere (people) will become monks.[16]

This is the earliest Chinese scriptural passage in which the Bodhisattva Yueguang tongzi is explicitly associated with China, but it should be added that the belief in Yueguang's appearance as a saintly reviver of the Doctrine in China must be older than this interpolation, as it is already alluded to in a letter of 365 CE.[17]

But the second interpolation found in Narendrayaśas' version of 583 CE, is even more specific:

> In a future age, in the final era of the Doctrine, in the country of Great Sui on the continent of Jambudvīpa, he will be a great king called Daxing 大行, who will be able to make all beings in the country of the Great Sui have faith in the Buddha's Doctrine and plant all roots of goodness. At that time the king Daxing, through the majestic power of his faith, will venerate my almsbowl. In those years my almsbowl will have arrived at the Kashgar 沙勒, and from there it will (move on and) by successive stages come to the country of the Great Sui, where the king Daxing will venerate it with offerings on a grand scale. He will be able to maintain all (parts of) the Buddha's Doctrine, and he will also cause the extensive scriptures 方廣經典 of the Mahāyāna to be written out in countless millions of copies, and will have these placed into Buddhist repositories named "*Dharma*-sanctuaries" 法藏. And he will have innumberable hundreds of thousands of Buddha-images made, and he will establish innumerable hundreds of thousands of Buddhist sanctuaries 佛塔 . . .[18]

[48] Needless to say that we here see Yueguang involved in religious propaganda at the service of the Sui emperor Wen, who is known consciously to have exploited Buddhist beliefs in order to justify his rule, and whose large-scale patronage of Buddhism is clearly alluded to in this interpolation.

However, about a century later Yueguang tongzi was again made to perform at the service of a temporal ruler, this time as part of the Buddhist

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[16] T 535, p. 819a.

[17] In a letter of Xi Zuochi 習鑿齒 to Dao'an, partly reproduced in *Gaoseng zhuan*, T 2059, j. 4, p. 352b: "Yueguang will appear, and (the Buddha's) supernatural Almsbowl is to descend" 月光將出, 靈鉢應降. The earliest reference to Yueguang (apart from translated scriptures) is the "Ode to Yueguang tongzi" 月光童子讃 (*Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, T 2103, j. 15, p. 197c), apiece of extremely obscure "metaphysical poetry" written by the famous scholar-monk and *xuanxue* 玄學 specialist Zhi Dun 支遁 (314–366). The text does not refer to the actual appearance of Yueguang in China, either as a saviour or as an ideal ruler; it merely states that "his beautiful (bodily) form flowered in India, and his fame is propagated in the region of the Red District (i.e. China)" 英姿秀乾竺, 名播赤縣鄉.

[18] T 545, j. 2, p. 849b–c.

propaganda by means of which Empress Wu tried to legitimize her position. In an apocryphal interpolation in the (undoubtedly authentic) *Ratnameghasūtra* 寶雨經 (T 660, trsl. Dharmaruci), Yueguang is foretold to be reborn in the country of Great China (摩訶支那, Mahācīna) as a powerful female ruler, who will bless her inhabitants with her wisdom and kindness, and make Buddhism flourish both spiritually and materially. After a long and peaceful rule she will be reborn in Tuṣita heaven and join the company of Maitreya.[19]

Needless to say that such legitimistic masquerades are not more than artifical constructions made for propagandistic purposes, and that they cannot be regarded as authentic expressions of any messianic faith living among the masses. But it is equally true that this propaganda must somehow be related to certain messianic expectations centered around the figure of Yueguang tongzi, for it would hardly be effective if the name of that Bodhisattva did not have a certain appeal among the public. To judge from the role attributed to Yueguang in imperial propaganda, he was not regarded as a final saviour. He does appear at a time of crisis, when the end of the Doctrine is near, but his role is that of a great revivalist who for a certain period restores the Doctrine. After that era of renewed splendour, the world again sinks back into the darkness of the *mofa*.

It is possible that we still are able to define the scriptural basis of this type of Yueguang belief, or at least one of its scriptural products, for we find Yueguang mentioned in this role in a short but highly interesting apocryphal text, the "Sūtra of the Annihilation of the Doctrine", *Fa miejin jing* 法滅盡經 (T 396, probably fifth century).[20] Its content may be sum-
[49] marized as follows.

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[19] T 660, j. 1, p. 284a; cf. also Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century*, Naples, 1976, pp. 125–136.

[20] The various Buddhist bibliographies contain many entries dealing with various versions (real or imaginary) of one or more texts called *Fa miejin jing*, *also* entitled *Fa mojin jing* 法沒盡經 and *Kongji pusa suo wen jing* 空寂菩薩所問經. The earliest bibliography, Sengyou's 僧祐 early 6th century *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏集記, T 2145, p. 28c, only mentions an anonymous *Fa miejin jing* with no variant titles. The next important catalogue, the early Sui *Zhongjing mulu* 衆經目錄 compiled by Fajing 法經 and others, lists a *Fa miejin jing*, also named *Kongji pusa suo wen jing*, among the "spurious texts" (T 2146, j. 2, p. 126c and 127a), as do the two next *Zhongjing mulu* of Sui and early Tang times (T 2147, j. 4, p. 173a; T 2148, j. 4, p. 138a). In the large Tang bibliographies from *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (T 2154, j. 5, p. 532c and j. 18, p. 675b) onward, both the anonymous (but "authentic") scripture and a "spurious" one are listed. Since Buddhist bibliographies always are cumulative in a rather uncritical way, including practically all entries from earlier catalogues and thereby excessively inflating the number of texts and versions, it would be tempting to conclude that Fajing's "spurious scripture" (after all a very appropriate description of this text) was

The Buddha stays at Kuśinagara, at the eve of his *Parinirvāṇa*, surrounded by countless monks and Bodhisattvas. After having asked three times why his body is not surrounded by a halo, as it always is when a sermon is being held, the Buddha tells Ānanda about the dark times that lie ahead. When the Doctrine is about to disappear, the world will be steeped in sin, and the way of Māra will flourish. At that time Māras will destroy the true religion by manifesting themselves as monks. This "satanic clergy" 衆魔比丘 will break all the rules of monastic life, wearing costly garments, drinking wine and eating meat, being unkind and jealous; they will ridicule and slander the few saintly persons who still devote themselves to piety and good works, and conspire to expel them from the Order. The *saṅgha* then degenerates completely. Temples are left to decay; in the monasteries treasures are accumu-
[50] lated instead of being spent on charity; monks engage in slave-trade;[21] they work the fields and burn the mountain forests (in order to reclaim temple lands). Male and female slaves are allowed to enter the Order, as are fugitives from justice. Thus the general level of the clergy is lowered to the point where they only recite the first and last lines of a text instead of chanting it in full, and even if they read it they cannot understand it. After the "satanic clergy" has performed its destructive task, it is reborn in Hell, but the process of decay will continue. The people will be decimated by floods and droughts, famine, and epidemics, and it will be oppressed by a cruel and immoral government. Due to the general disorder, the days and months become ever shorter; since the decline of morals has led to sexual excesses, the life-span of males is limited to a maximum of sixty years, whereas that of women is extended to a hundred years of age. Then the catastrophes break out. Most sinners will be swallowed by the deluge; the few remaining sages withdraw into the mountains. At that moment the Bodhisattva Yueguang will appear; as a saintly king he will once more revive the Doctrine,

identical with the one mentioned by Sengyou, and that the inclusion of two texts, a "genuine" and a "spurious" one, in later catalogues is one of the innumerable cases of double listing. However, in that case the alternative title "The scripture of the questions posed by the Bodhisattva Kongji" cannot be explained, since no person of that name is referred to in the present text. To complicate matters even more, the various bibliographies also mention "lost" versions attributed to well-known translators of the 3rd and 4th century: to Zhi Qian 支謙 (earliest reference T 2149, j. 2, p. 229b; listed as "lost" from T 2154, j. 2, p. 489a onward); to Dharmarakṣa (T 2149, j. 2, p. 241c; "lost" in T 2154, j. 2, p. 495c and later catalogues); and to Gītamitra (T 2149, j. 3, p. 247b; "lost" in T 2153, j. 13, p. 464b and later catalogues). These entries probably are false attributions of the same text(s), in accordance with the general tendency of Chinese bibliographers to ascribe originally anonymous versions to famous translators. However that may be, the scripture that now figures in the Canon (T 396) certainly is the one listed by Sengyou, as is proved by the fact that Sengyou himself has copied almost the whole text of the *Fa miejin jing* in section 34 of his compilation *Shijia pu* 釋迦譜, T 2040, pp. 83c–84b. It must therefore already have been in existence at the end of the fifth century.

21 T 396, p. 1119.1: 販賣奴婢, 耕田種植, which seems to refer to the system of temple-serfs allotted to the monasteries in order to work the temple fields, as developed under the Tuoba Wei.

> and he will rule for fifty-two years. But after that last splendour, the final decline sets in. In three stages the sacred scriptures vanish from this world: first the *Śūraṃgama-sūtra*, then the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi*, and afterwards all the other scriptures. The monks' cloaks will all turn white (symbolizing the disappearance of the clergy as a distinct group). The revival has been a temporary one: "At the time of the disappearance of my Doctrine, it will be like an oil-lamp that shines even more brightly when it is about to expire—and then it is extinguished." What happens afterwards is difficult to describe. After several millions of years, Maitreya will descend and reach Buddhahood, and then there will be universal peace; all poisonous fluids 毒氣 will be eliminated; timely rains will ensure abundant harvests; the human body will measure eighty feet, and people will live for 84,000 years. Finally, Ānanda is informed of the title of this scripture; this text must be made known to all people, and the karmic merit earned through its propagation is immeasurable.

This short apocryphal text is very instructive, for various reasons. It is extremely outspoken in its criticism of the established *saṅgha*, that is simple regarded as a force of evil, a "satanic clergy" intent upon destroying all truly religious values. Yueguang is depicted as a temporary saviour manifesting himself as a saintly ruler for fifty-two years in order to
[51] let the lamp shine once more in the age of darkness. He is not identical or directly associated with Maitreya, whose advent will take place in the very distant future. On the other hand, he has advanced yet another step towards the status of an eschatological figure, for he appears in a real apocalyptic situation, marked by the deluge, the destruction of sinners, and the separation of the *electi*.

Yueguang tongzi's transformation from an obscure Bodhisattva to a full-fledged messiah is completed in an extremely curious apocryphal text, that in spite of its popularity for obvious reasons never has been admitted to the official Buddhist Canon, but has survived in a number of Dunhuang manuscripts. It is entitled "The Scripture of the monk Shouluo" *Shouluo biqiu jing* 首羅比丘經 after the name of the main personage in the first part of the text, and probably dates from the sixth century.[22] It is a

[22] First mentioned in T 2146 衆經目錄 (594 CE), j. 2, p. 126c; also listed in the later Sui and Tang catalogues among the spurious texts: T 2147 j. 4, p. 173b; T 2149 j. 10, p. 334c; T 2153 j. 15, p. 473a; T 2154 j. 4, p. 173b; T 2157 j. 28, p. 1020a, I have made use of five Dunhuang manuscripts from the London and Peking collections: (1) Peking ms. 292:8247 which is nearly complete (about twenty characters lacking at the beginning); (2) Peking 292:8275 (first eighteen columns of (1) lacking); (3) S 2697, the most incomplete manuscript (first 68 columns of (1) lacking), reproduced in vol. 85, no. 2873, in the *Taishō Canon;* (4) S 6881 (first 25 columns of (1) lacking); (5) S 1811 (first 46 columns of (1) lacking). The text can be tentatively dated between 518 (the year in which Sengyou completed his *Chu sanzang ji ji*,

prophetic text partly written in a kind of oracular language that is only partly intelligible; in particular the final sections—a long succession of cryptic sayings, veiled allusions, symbolic images, and plays on words—defy all attempts at understanding. It clearly belongs to the more or less esoteric tradition of the earliest known phase of sectarian Buddhism, and is therefore a unique document. A number of obscure passages can be made somewhat clearer by comparing them with a second apocalyptic text, also preserved in a number of Dunhuang manuscripts, the "Scripture of the Realization of Understanding spoken by the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra" *Puxian pusa shuo zhengming jing* 普賢菩薩說證明經 which on the basis of both external and internal evidence may be dated between
[52] 560 and 589 CE.[23] Although Yueguang is mentioned in this text too, the main apocalyptic role is here played by Maitreya. It belongs to the same tradition of "oracular" literature full of cryptic terms and allusions, but as a whole it is more coherent and understandable than the *Shouluo jing*, and it contains certain themes, such as the reconstruction of the world after the cosmic disaster, that are lacking, or only briefly alluded to, in the latter.

Elsewhere[24] I propose to give a more detailed analysis and summary of the *Shouluo jing*. Here I shall limit myself to the main themes of Buddho-Daoist eschatology—the ones mentioned in the beginning of this article—and show how they appear in this apocalyptic text, with some additions taken from the "Sūtra of Samantabhadra".

(1) *The crisis* is clearly one of cosmic dimensions. The world is first ravaged by the three scourges of deluge, epidemics, and "evil powers" (*yaoxie* 妖邪) that exterminate the vast majority of sinners. As in Daoist tradition,

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in which the scripture is not mentioned) and 589 CE when it figures for the first time in a Buddhist bibliography.

[23] A critical edition based on three Dunhuang mss. has been included in vol. 85 of the *Taishō Canon*, T 2879. To the six mss. mentioned by Antonino Forte may be added four more from the Peking collection, *viz.* nos. 2098: 8290–8293. The scripture figures among the "spurious texts" in all the important Buddhist bibliographies since Fajing's catalogue of 589 CE (T 2146 j. 2, p. 126c), and therefore probably dates from somewhere between 518 and 589 CE (cf. preceding note). However, the text contains a very rare transcription of the word Jambudvīpa, written 閻浮履, which to my knowledge first occurs in the vocabulary of the translator Jñānagupta who was active in Chang'an from 560 CE onward. If we accept this criterium, it follows that the "Sūtra of Samantabhadra" was produced between 560 and 589.

[24] A much more detailed study of this scripture will be published in *T'oung Pao* under the title "Prince Moonlight: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Buddhism".

the cataclysm is concretely fixed in time as well as in space: the cataclysm will take place in the two successive years *shen* 申 and *you* 酉, and the saviour Yueguang, also called "The King of Light" 明王 or "The Lord of Peace" 平君, will appear "north of the Yellow River, and south of the Weak Water" 弱水, to be "king in the territory of Han" 王於漢境. When the deluge comes, it will be safe in the area of Yangzhou 陽州, i.e. "in the southeast", in other words: in the Lower Yangzi region. Needless to say that the disasters are described in appalling detail: the havoc wrought by armies of demons led by monstrous Māra-kings; the seven days and nights of deep darkness during which heaven and earth are dislocated by heavy earthquakes, and the
[53] shouts of the victims who are carried away by the waves of the deluge. In the "Scripture of Samantabhadra" the whole world is finally burnt down by a cosmic conflagration caused by an Asura who holds seven suns in his hands.

(2) The world becomes a scene of *apocalyptic battles* between the supernatural forces of destruction and salvation. The demon-armies led by thirty-six Māra-kings are defeated by a powerful Trāyastriṃśa god who rides a dragon-horse and wields divine arms. According to the "Scripture of Samantabhadra" the demon-kings attack Maitreya when the latter descends on the burning earth in a wonderful shrine, and are defeated by an army of myriads of warlike Bodhisattvas.

(3) *The saviour* Yueguang is a curious mixture of Daoist immortal, Bodhisattva, prophet, and messiah. Before the disasters take place, he resides in a subterranean cave on the well-known mythical island Penglai 蓬萊, together with three thousand Saints, and he reveals his prophecy to a mixed company of visitors that partly consists of five hundred Immortals led by a "Great Immortal" 大仙. As a prophet, he gives a detailed account of the terrible things that will take place, and of the methods to be followed in order to be saved. When he appears in the world, all virtuous people will be able to see him in all his glory and be saved; however, even now his devotees can "visualise" his body with all its attributes by reciting a magic spell (a *dhāraṇī* written in pseudo-Sanskrit) and by practising mental concentration. Like the Daoist saviour, he will not have to act all alone: the text lists, with amazing explicitness, the names of nineteen "Sages" 賢 who are now already living in this world.[25] But mortal eyes

[25] T 2873, p. 1356c 20–22, and 26–23. In addition, the text mentions three larger groups of helpers (p. 1357a), consisting of sixteen "Equanimous Ones" 平等, seventy-two "True Gentlemen" 正士, and three thousand "Sages" 賢. Like the spiritual leaders mentioned by name in the first two lists, they are said to be unrecognizable to the profane as long as the

[54] cannot recognize them, for they are hiding among the common people, sometimes even disguised as fools and sinners. When the time has come, they will reveal themselves.

(4) *The judgment* implies an absolute separation between devotees and sinners; the line even runs through families, for at that time "the father will not know his son, nor will the mother know her daughter".[26] As in the Daoist tradition, the chosen people constitutes a small minority: only 84,000 or 87,000 persons will be saved. Their salvation is the result of their wholehearted devotion to a very simple kind of Buddhist religion, consisting of the confession of the Triple Refuge, the Five Rules to be observed by laymen; fasting, and, above all, abstention from desire, repentance, and a willingness to undergo a moral and mental transformation: "to change the heart and to change the thoughts" 改心改意. Devotion and repentance must be total, for soon a Lord of Darkness 闇君 will come, and only those who exert themselves to the utmost can be saved. The text clearly suggests that the *electi* are lay Buddhists rather than monks and nuns; in keeping with the anti-clerical orientation that we also observed in other apocrypha, it predicts that only one out of every thousand monks will be saved. The chosen ones are physically rescued from the deluge and transported—again, physically, and not by rebirth!—to a Magic City 化城 of great splendour,[27] situated in the Tuṣita heaven, or on an island in the ocean.

(5) In addition to this Magic City as a paradise-like region of bliss, the "Scripture of Samantabhadra" also contains a description of the reconstruction of the world into an ideal state after the conflagration. The earth is built up anew in seven layers of precious materials. The top layer is of gold, and it bears silver trees and splendid buildings adorned with

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"Old Moon" 古月 is flourishing. The latter term—apparently referring to some kind of evil power or "fluid", and here opposed to Yueguang as the new "Moonlight"—also occurs in the Daoist apocalyptic scripture TT 322 天地運度經 p. 4b: 古月侵神洲. It is, of course, tantalizing to explain 古月 as another case of a "dissected character", the two graphs together forming the word *hu* 胡 "barbarian". However, there is no sign of such an association in the messianic lore around Yueguang tongzi. He is not represented as a symbol of China versus the barbarians, and, as we have seen above (p. 47), in the interpolation in the *Shenri jing* he is even expressly said to convert the barbarians in all border regions.

[26] T 2873, p. 1358b5: 公不識兒, 母不識女.

[27] The name of this ideal city is probably derived from the "Parable of the Magic City 化城喻 in the seventh section of the *Lotus Sūtra* (trsl. Kumārajīva, T 262 j. 3, pp. 25c–26a), cf. Antonino Forte, op. cit., pp. 162–163. However, the actual description of its lay-out and splendour, and the fact that it contains a kind of central citadel called "Tuṣita City" 兜率城 seem to be inspired by the paradise-like residence of Maitreya in the heaven of that name.

luminous jewels. There the blessed ones are leading a life of unspeakable happiness that lasts 87,000 years, after which they are transported to the eastern paradise of the Buddha Akṣobhya.

[55] The *Shouluo jing* is no doubt a fascinating document, but at the present stage of research it raises more problems than can be answered. In the first place, it still is not clear why and how, out of the immense mass of Mahāyāna lore, this very obscure Bodhisattva was selected to play such an important role in Chinese eschatology. Secondly, the esoteric character of the text greatly hampers our understanding. We can, however, conclude from the use of such cryptic language and from certain puzzling references to terms and practices known from (much later) secret society lore[28] that the message basically was intended for an inner circle of initiates.

However, it is still virtually impossible to provide this text with a concrete historical background. It appears to be an expression of a fervent millenarianism that probably was limited to small groups who by fasting, repentance and prayer prepared themselves for the last days. The reference to Yangzhou makes it probable that the movement started in the Lower Yangzi region, but its occurrence in court-sponsored Buddhist bibliographies and the many Dunhuang versions prove that at least in T'ang times it must have extended its influence to the metropolitan area, and into the far northwest. To my knowledge, there is only one passage in secular historiography that refers to Yueguang tongzi. There our Bodhisattva, whose name clearly is interpreted as *the youth* Yueguang, figures as the object of a popular cult centered around an eight year old boy who was made to pose as his incarnation—a pitiful role that curiously resembles the equally tragic fate of the "child-incarnations" in later Lamaism. According to the *Treatise on Punishments* of the *Weishu* 魏書, the affair was brought to the attention of the authorities in the period 516/517 CE. The boy, whose normal name was Liu Jinghui, was living in Yanling 延陵 (in present-day southern Hebei), and was manipulated by a number of people, "(the monk?) Faquan 法權 and others", who called him "the Yueguang youth Liu Jinghui" 月光童子劉景暉 and "with impish talk deluded the masses" 妖言惑衆, a major crime warranting the death penalty. When the matter was discussed at court, it was considered that
[56] the boy was rather a victim than a criminal. He was a mere child, "his

[28] Especially the reference to the "Willow City", Liucheng 柳城, well known from secret society lore as the spiritual centre of the brotherhood (p. 1356c 5), and to the use of a kind of esoteric "finger-language" to be used among the electi (p. 1358c 4–7).

mouth still having the smell of milk". He had never pretended to be able to transform himself into a snake or a pheasant, nor had he himself said to be Yueguang—those were all fantastic stories spread by unscrupulous elements. As he was not responsible for what was said and done in his entourage, the Empress-Dowager Ling was advised to spare his life, and the unfortunate kid was finally banished to the frontier commandery of Lueyang 略陽 in the far northwest.[29]

It is an intriguing story that leaves many questions unanswered. There is no reason to suppose that the group of people who manipulated the boy had any intention to start a rebellion, and we have no idea of the number of people involved. It may be that the very use of the name Yueguang tongzi with its messianic associations made this local cult potentially dangerous, at least in the eyes of the authorities. However, the text does not suggest that in this case the messianic aspect played a significant role—the emphasis seems rather to be on the "youth" (*tongzi*) of the incarnation, and on the latter's power of "transformation" which is one of the most basic themes in Chinese popular religious lore of all ages.

However, in spite of its marginal nature within the larger context of Chinese Buddhism, and even if we are yet unable to answer any but a few of the questions it raises, the remarkable career of Prince Moonlight may be worth saving from oblivion, not only as a curious phenomenon in itself, but also as a clear illustration of the "Daoist counter-current" in early medieval Chinese Buddhism.

[29] *Weishu* j. 111 (刑罰志), ed. Zhonghua shuju, Peking, 1974, pp. 2884–2885. Cf. also Tsukamoto Zenryū, op. cit., p. 282–284.

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"PRINCE MOONLIGHT"
MESSIANISM AND ESCHATOLOGY IN EARLY MEDIEVAL CHINESE BUDDHISM

When in the course of the Nanbei-chao period the two main traditions of Chinese religious thought—religious Daoism and Mahāyāna Buddhism—took shape and developed, their relation was one of constant interaction, mutual enrichment, and, in some cases, complete amalgamation. When I, some time ago, presented a preliminary survey and analysis of Buddhist loans in early medieval Daoist scriptures,[1] I had to warn the reader that my presentation was necessarily one-sided, for by focusing upon the evidence of Buddhist influence in Daoist texts, no justice was done to the importance of the "Daoist counter-current". The present study may be taken as an attempt to redress the balance. The choice of the subject is not fortuitous. Many other cases of Daoist influence upon early medieval Chinese Buddhism could have been chosen, ranging from terminological loans to hagiographic themes and cultic practices, but the impact and integrative force of Daoist ideas are nowhere more clearly manifested than in the development of eschatological and messianic[2] beliefs in Chinese Buddhism from the late third to the late sixth century CE.

Since we are dealing with a typically hybrid complex of ideas that contains elements from both traditions, we shall first have to take a look at those elements, or themes, in their original context. This will be the subject of the first two sections. In the first part I propose to present a brief survey of the main themes in Daoist eschatology, centering around
[2] the belief in cosmic disasters at the end of a cycle and in the appearance of a superhuman saviour. In the second part, we shall have to

[1] "Buddhist Influence on Early Daoism: A Survey of Scriptural Evidence", *T'oung Pao* 66, 1980, pp. 84–147.

[2] Since the term "messianism" nowadays is often used in a rather loose and metaphorical way, it may be useful to point out that the words "eschatology" and "messianism" are here used in their original, specifically religious sense: the complex of beliefs concerning a (usually violent) end of our world through the action of superhuman powers, and the expectation of a Saviour whose nature is clearly defined as divine, or at least belonging to a superhuman level of existence.

examine in how far the "original" Buddhist heritage, i.e. Buddhism as it was introduced into China from without, in itself contained certain elements that may be called eschatological and messianic. Thirdly, we shall trace the further development of a number of such ideas within Chinese Buddhism, and some characteristic changes and adaptations which they underwent in their new environment, notably under the influence of indigenous beliefs. After those preliminary sections, we shall turn to our basic subject: the emergence of a Buddho-Daoist complex of eschatological beliefs and expectations, with special emphasis upon the messianic role assumed by a rather obscure Bodhisattva called Yueguang tongzi 月光童子, i.e. Candraprabhakumāra, a name that may be rendered, in spite of its romantic associations, as "Prince Moonlight".[3]

I. *The Daoist Tradition*

Quite a number of early medieval Daoist scriptures contain references to, or even detailed descriptions of the disasters that will come upon sinful mankind when the times are fulfilled; the coming of a messiah and his helpers; the apocalyptic battles that will take place; the salvation of a small minority of *electi*, and the establishment of what, *mutatis mutandis*, may be called a New Jerusalem. In this introductory section we can only summarize the main themes, which are the following.

(a) *The crisis.* The belief that time (or rather "duration", for the theories are always concerned with the movement and changes of concrete things *in* time) moves on in cycles; that the universe in its many constituent parts passes through a great number of simultaneous cycles of different length, and that this complicated mechanism from time to time reaches certain "nodal points" or "conjunctions" (*hui* 會), when the beginning of several cycles coincide, was a basic assumption in Chinese cosmology at
[3] least since Han times.[4] However, the idea that some of such nodal points in time will be accompanied by cosmic disasters and the appearance of

[3] The word *kumāra* means "a youth", and more specifically, "a crown-prince". It is no doubt in the latter sense that *-kumāra* very often figures as the second part in composite names of Bodhisattvas, who on account of their future Buddhahood enjoy, in a way, the status of "heir-apparent". The Chinese equivalent *tongzi* does not have any association with future royalty.

[4] Cf. Nathan Sivin, "Cosmos and Computation in Early Chinese Mathematical Astronomy", *T'oung Pao* 55, 1969, pp. 1–73.

a saintly redeemer does not appear to be older than the third century of our era.[5] In the Daoist world-view, the cataclysm is also drawn into the moral sphere, in accordance with the general view of disasters as Heaven's responses to human depravity. Thus, the crisis is not only represented as a mechanical happening, but also as a punitive reaction to the moral degeneration of mankind: the neglect of religious duties; social misbehaviour; abuse of power, and corruption. As to be expected in prophetic literature, we often find a quasi-exact dating of the years in which the crisis is to start, to reach its climax, and to be solved. Various systems of dating are used. Most common is the use of cyclical characters identifying the fateful year within a sixty-year period. Thus, according to the *Shenzhou jing* 神呪經, the destruction will begin in the year *renwu* 壬午 (382?, 442?), when the world will be swallowed by a deluge, demons will cause epidemics, and even sun and moon will disappear. Then, in the year *renchen* 壬辰 (392?, 452?) the messiah Li Hong 李弘 will appear. In other cases, a fixed point in time is used as a basis for calculation: the cataclysm will take place 90,000 years after "the opening up of Heaven and Earth", or 2,760 years (= 46 cycles of sixty years) after Yao's accession to the throne, which according to traditional chronology would yield the year 403 CE.[6]

[4] (b) *The messiah* is clearly a being of a higher order of existence, basically different from the founder of a dynasty in the well-known political mythology.[7] He is at least a prophet, directly inspired by a personalized

[5] The earliest occurrence appears to be found in DZ 1168 (counting according to K. M. Schipper, *Concordance du Tao-tsang*), 太上老君中經, section 52: shorter and longer cycles, combined with the periodic appearance of Sages 賢人, Saints 聖入, and Perfected Ones 真人. The end of every cycle of 3,600,000 years is marked by the "great conjunction of Heaven and Earth" 天地大會, in which everything is reduced to an indistinct, chaotic state.

[6] DZ 322 太上靈寶天地運度自然妙經 pp. 6^{b}–7^{a}; DZ 335 太上洞淵神呪經 j. 9, p. 2^{b}; DZ 442 上清後聖道君列紀 pp. 3^{b}–4^{a}; DZ 103 雲笈七籤 j. 2 p. 7^{b} quoting the original 上清三天正法經; 太平經鈔, 甲部 (late Tang summary of the 6th century Shangqing redaction of the *Tai-pingjing*), ed. Wang Ming 王明, *Taipingjing hejiao* 太平經合校, Peking, 1960, p. 4; S. 2081 太上靈寶老子化胡妙經, studied and translated by Anna Seidel, cf. note 15 (I may here express my gratitude to Anna Seidel, who has kindly provided me with a copy of the typescript of her excellent article).

[7] I shall not go into the complicated problem of the relation between the political theology centered around the concept of the Mandate of Heaven, the political utopianism of the earliest Daoist movements, and the political function of the prophetic literature of the Han period. The political mythology and religious millenarianism no doubt share a number of features, and both are rooted in a cosmological world-view that they have in common; but it remains true that in the period studied here, religious messianism had become an independent tradition. Cf. Anna K. Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao-tseu dans le Taoïsme des Han*, Paris, 1969; id., "The Image of the Perfect Ruler in Early Daoist Messianism: Lao-tzu and Li Hong", *History of Religions* 9, 1969-'70, pp. 216–247; K. M. Schipper, "Millenarismes

divine power; normally he is a high-ranking Immortal, or the manifestation of a god. The increasing other-worldliness of Daoist utopianism is strikingly illustrated by the gradual apotheosis of the saviour Li Hong (also known in prophetic texts as Muzigongkou 木子弓口 or Gongkoushibazi 弓口十八子): originally a rather obscure sage of the first century BCE; two centuries later the object of a local cult in the Chengdu region; then the semi-divine inspirator of fourth century rebel leaders who operated under his name; finally, in the late fourth and fifth century fully canonized as the August Lord of the Golden Gate-house 金闕帝君 or as a manifestation of the god Laozi himself.[8]

(c) *The helpers* of the messiah are a regular part of the soteriological scheme. Unlike the assistants of the worldly founder of a dynasty, they are not generals or advisors, but supernatural saints whose names sometimes are explicitly mentioned. They are living in this world, not recognized by
[5] common mortals, and they bide their time till the saviour will appear.[9]

(d) In the last phase the world is transformed into a gigantic *battlefield*. Not four, but myriads of apocalyptic riders and spirit-generals strike mankind with death and damnation; other hosts are sent down to fight them and to protect the *electi* from their attacks. But only a small minority is to be preserved: they constitute the "chosen people" (*zhongmin* 種民),[10] who actively prepare themselves for salvation, with prayers and fasting, and

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et messianismes dans la Chine ancienne", in *Understanding Modern China, Proceedings of the XXVIth Conference of Chinese Studies, European Association of Chinese Studies*, Rome 1979, pp. 31–49; Barbara Kandel, *Taipingjing, the Origin and Transmission of the "Scripture on General Welfare": The History of an Unofficial Text*, Hamburg, 1979, esp. p. 4 sqq.

[8] Cf. Anna K. Seidel in *History of Religions* 9 (cf. note 7), esp. pp. 236–244; K. M. Schipper, op. cit., pp. 33–34. The main references to Li Hong as a divine saviour are found in TT 322 太上靈寶天地運度自然妙經 p. 4^{b} and p. 6^{a} (弓口十八子); T 335 太上洞淵神呪經 j. 1 p. 4^{a} (木子弓口); TT 442 太上後聖道君列紀. 2^{b} TT 1195 老君變化無極經 p. 2^{a}.

[9] Helpers sent down to guide the chosen people: TT 335 j. 1 p. 10^{b}; *ib.*, j. 9 p. 2^{a}; TT 442 p. 7^{b} (list of twenty-four Perfected Ones); 太平經鈔, 甲部, ed. Wang Ming (cf. note 6), p. 4.

[10] The exact meaning of *zhong* is not clear. The explanation given in 太平經鈔, 甲部 (ed. Wang Ming, p. 2) seems to suggest ("seed" =) "fine essence, (spiritual) refinement": 精鍊成聖, 故號種民 but that is a rather late source. In the (probably late fourth century) TT 442 上淸後聖道君列紀, p. 4^{b} *zhòng* is clearly used as a transitive verb, ("to plant" =) "to establish," as opposed to *chu* 除 "to eliminate": 甲申之歲, 已前已後, 種善人. 除残民—hence, "those (whose salvation) is firmly established, or secured". But *zhǒng* may also be taken as a noun, "the (right) kind (of people)", those who belong to the inner circle of *electi.* In Buddhist texts, 種 or 種姓 is regularly used for *gotra* (lit. "family"), in the specialized sense of "religious group, communion" (cf. F. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, New Haven, 1953, p. 269).

armed with the holy texts and talismans that will protect them when the judgement comes.

(e) This final *judgement* implies a complete separation between the pious minority and the vast majority of sinners who are doomed to perish. But in actual fact, the decision has been taken long before. The *zhongmin* are predestined (*youyuan* 有緣) to be saved; their bodies bear the sacred marks that indicate their special status, and their names have since long been entered into heavenly registers. Their number is fixed: 300,000 or 330,000 will survive the disasters. The judgement also implies a physical separation: the *electi* are set apart from the others, on safe places, from where they are transported to higher spheres.

(f) The *"New Jerusalem"*: finally, the world is reintegrated into an ideal state,[11] where the saviour either himself rules through "non-action", or plays the role of the divine inspirator of a saintly king, surrounded by a hierarchy of heavenly officials. It goes without saying that the inhabitants of this paradise lead a blissful life that may last thousands of years, or even aeons.

In spite of all kinds of variations, this Daoist eschatology forms a rather consistent and well-integrated complex of ideas, in which every part has its logical place, and the various roles are clearly marked. The whole
[6] complex is furthermore strikingly autochthonous, for Buddhist influence appears to be limited to some minor, mainly ornamental, features.[12]

II. *The Buddhist Input*

What had "original" Buddhism—here to be understood as the totality of Buddhist elements that reached China from abroad in this period—to

[11] TT 335 j. 1, pp. 10^{b}–11^{b}; *ib.*, j. 9, p. 2^{b}.

[12] The belief that the end of a major cycle will be accompanied by a cosmic upheaval may have been reinforced by the Buddhist notion of "*kalpa*-disasters" (*jiezai* 劫災, cf. below, under II.a). Buddhist influence can also be recognized in the imagery concerning the exorbitant length of an aeon (e.g. TT 532 太極真人敷靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣, p. 19^{a}), and in the idea that at the completion of a Great Aeon (大劫之周) the destruction will only affect the lower levels of existence, up to the "Realm of Form", 色界 *rūpadhātu* (TT 23 太上諸天寶書度命妙經 pp. 14^{b}–15^{a}). But the long list of stigmata in the late fourth century TT 442 上淸後聖道君列紀 pp. 9^{b}–11^{b} does not show any trace of being influenced by the Buddhist *lakṣaṇa*, and in the legendarized account of Li Hong's life in the same scripture only one minor detail (the *nāgas* bathing the new-born baby, *ib.*, p. 1^{b}) has been borrowed from Buddhist hagiography.

offer? If we try to inventorize the non-Chinese Buddhist tradition, we can single out at least five themes that are relevant to our subject: the cyclical conception of time coupled with the belief in a periodic destruction of our universe; the prophecies concerning the degeneration and final disappearance of the Doctrine; the belief in the appearance of future Buddhas in this world, in particular Maitreya; the saving power of advanced Bodhisattvas; and the segregation of pious believers by rebirth in paradise-like regions outside our universe. How far do these themes have eschatological and messianic implications?

(a) *The cosmic eras* (*kalpa, jie* 劫). Any universe, with the exception of its highest celestial levels, passes through an endless sequence of cosmic periods: aeons of stupendous length during which a world-system evolves, exists, and disintegrates. A Great Aeon (*mahākalpa, dajie* 大劫) consists of a number of shorter, but still unimaginably lengthy, aeons (*kalpa, jie* 劫). At the end of each Great Aeon the physical universe is destroyed by catastrophes of water, fire, and wind, after which emptiness and darkness reign for a whole "intermediate *kalpa*". But the world-system is only demolished up to a certain level. The highest heavens are spared; there all sentient beings have been reborn even before the catastrophes have started, and it
[7] is also from there that they will be reborn on the lower levels of existence, each one according to his karmic destination, when a new "receptacle-world" has taken shape.[13]

As we shall see, this belief in "*kalpa*-disasters" and the periodic destruction of our world was to play a very important role in the development of Buddho-Daoist eschatology. However, in its original form it can hardly be called eschatological in the proper sense of the word. In the Buddhist complex, the dissolution of the "receptacle-world" is not coupled with a final judgement, nor with a separation of the saved and the damned, and certainly not with the establishment of a New Heaven and a New Earth. When the world is destroyed, it is no more than an empty shell. When

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[13] Buddhist cosmology had become known in China through the first version of the very popular *Da loutan jing*, T 23 大樓炭經, translated around 300 CE by Bo Fali 帛法立 and Bo Faju 帛法炬. A detailed account of the "three catastrophes" 三災變 is found in that version on pp. 302c–305a. For the influence of the *Da loutan jing* in Daoist circles, see my article mentioned in note 1, p. 139 (where, incidentally, I rendered the hypothetical Sanskrit equivalent of the title as (?) *Lokadhātu-sūtra*. This reconstruction is unsatisfactory; the—of course equally hypothetical—**Lokasthāna-sūtra*, as given in the *Répertoire du Canon bouddhique*, ed. by H. Durt and A. Seidel, Tokyo, 1978, is preferable).

after the aeon of suspended existence a new world-system has come into being, the process of *karman* recommences: the intermediate *kalpa* of non-existence is an intermezzo—the actors return to the stage, and the show goes on from the point where it has stopped before. In each *kalpa* there are ups and downs. Worldly prosperity reaches its climax under the reign of a perfect "Monarch Turner-of-the-Wheel" (*zhuanlun shengwang* 轉輪聖王, *cakravartin*), characterized by universal peace, longevity, and material well-being. Spiritually speaking, a highest point is reached when a Buddha appears in the world and reveals the Doctrine; it is a happening of utmost rarity, and blessed are those who on account of their karmic merit are reborn in such a time and place that they can witness it. On the other hand, there are dark periods of intensified suffering, moral degeneration and decreasing life-span, in which the world is stricken by famine, war, and epidemics, and the good *dharma* has been eclipsed. However, rebirth in such a situation is the fruit of one's own *karman* that works automatically and on a strictly individual basis. It is not the result of any external judgement, and the general situation of decay and sin has no connection with the destruction of the world at
[8] the end of a Great Aeon.

(b) *Prophecies* concerning the end of the world do not play any significant part in the non-Chinese Buddhist tradition. However, other types of prophecy are quite common in Mahāyāna Buddhism; they are generally made by the Buddha, who due to his Omniscience (*sarvajñatā, yiqiezhi* 一切智) has unlimited knowledge of the future. A very frequent kind of prophecy is the *vyākaraṇa* (*shouji* 授記) formula, by which the Buddha in stereotyped terms foretells someone's religious career in future lives, culminating in the latter's achievement of Buddhahood. The prediction of future Buddhahood was destined to become an important theme in the kind of literature that we are dealing with, as it forms the scriptural base of all messianic expectations connected with Maitreya and Candraprabhakumāra. But even more important for our subject is a type of prediction that concerns the gradual decay and final disappearance of the Buddhist Doctrine itself. In a great number of canonical scriptures and scholastic texts we find, with many variations, the story that the Buddha Śākyamuni himself has warned his disciples that "the Good Law will not forever be present in this world", and that after a certain period it is doomed to be extinguished. The idea was later elaborated into a scheme of "three stages" (*sanjie* 三階), each of which is to last several centuries. The first period, starting with the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, is that of the

"True Doctrine" (*saddharma, zhengfa* 正法), during which the principles preached by the Buddha are known and practised in their pristine purity. In the second phase, that of the "Counterfeit Doctrine" (*saddharma-pratirūpaka, xiangfa* 像法), religious life is more and more undermined by heresy and immoral practices, in which not only the laity but also the *saṅgha* itself indulge. In the end, when even the semblance of religious life is gone, the world will enter the dark "Final Age of the Doctrine: (*sad-dharmavipralopa, mofa* 末法), and be lost in sin and injustice, until, after an immense span of time, the true *Dharma* will be revived by the next
[9] Buddha.[14]

(c) *Maitreya* (Mile 彌勒), who is to be the next Buddha in our world-system after Śākyamuni, is believed to dwell in the paradise-like Tuṣita heaven (Doushuai tian 兜率天) as a Bodhisattva of the highest stage, awaiting the moment of his descent. According to the most authoritative sources, he is still to stay there for an extremely long time. In the distant future he will be reborn in this world under the rule of a Universal Monarch, and hence in an era of almost unlimited prosperity and happiness. But pious believers do not have to wait all those billions of years to see him: they can be reborn in Maitreya's palace-like dwelling in Tuṣita heaven, and even in this life they can visualize (*guan* 觀) him through mental concentration and receive his instructions.

(d) *The saving power of Bodhisattvas* is another theme that was to play an important role in the development of Chinese Buddhist messianism. They are represented as saintly figures who manifest themselves anywhere in the universe, in all possible forms, to perform the most extreme feats of altruism, saving grace and self-sacrifice for the benefit and spiritual improvement of all beings. Some of them are rather well-defined personalities, surrounded by their own legendary lore, and recognizable by their attributes. But the vast majority of the thousands of Bodhisattvas who figure in Mahāyāna scriptures are little more than names, or, at best, minor actors who in Mahāyāna scriptures play a modest role as parts of the Buddha's entourage. As we shall see, in the messianic belief

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[14] For a survey of the various traditions in Indian Buddhism, see Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Louvain, 1967, pp. 210–222; J. Przyluski, *La légende de l'Empereur Açoka dans les textes indiens et chinois*, Paris, 1925, esp. j. VII: "Développement des idées eschatologiques relatives à la Loi"; L. de la Vallée Poussin, *Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, Paris, 1925, vol. V, pp. 219–221 (= T 1558 俱舍論, trsl. Xuanzang, j. 29, p. 152b). For the many different statements about the length of each of the three stages see below, note 35.

on which we shall concentrate in the last part of this study, the role of the saviour is played by one of such minor Bodhisattvas—perhaps because by his very indistinctness he more easily lent himself to mythological elaboration than such outspoken characters as Avalokiteśvara or Mañjuśrī.

(e) Finally, the *segregation of pious believers* by rebirth in a paradise-like "Buddha-region" outside this universe (like Amitābha's "pure land" in the extreme West, or Akṣobhya's land of bliss in the far East), or, in the case of the Maitreya cult, amidst the splendours of the Tuṣita heaven, is a well-known feature of Mahāyāna devotionalism, which has clearly influenced the image of the "New Jerusalem" in Chinese Buddhist eschatology, even if it originally had no such connotations at all.

If we try to summarize the "original Buddhist input", we must conclude that it does not contain any elements that could be called, *stricto sensu*,
[10] eschatological-messianic. There is a very elaborate representation of cosmic disasters at the end of a cycle, but this is not connected with any belief in a collective judgement or with the creation of an ideal world. The *mofa* belief is concerned with the disappearance of the True Doctrine, but it bears no relation to the cyclical destruction of our world. Maitreya may be called, in a loose sense, a Buddhist messiah (in fact, it is one of his standard epithets in western literature). But in the orthodox tradition Maitreya is, basically, a teacher and a revealer of the Doctrine. He will reach Buddhahood in the distant future, in a situation of peace and universal well-being—he is certainly not a messiah who saves his chosen people from disasters and establishes an ideal state. The same may be said of the Bodhisattva in general. His salutary action is primarily aimed at the spiritual advancement of individual beings; the ideal is neither socially nor politically orientated. The world as such cannot be saved by him, because all existence is *per se* subjected to suffering and impermanence.

A second conclusion must be that the Buddhist themes listed above show little coherence with each other, and cannot be said to form a consistent complex. They appear to have developed more or less independently, and in some respects clearly contradict each other—as in the case of the descent of Maitreya in a world of great moral and material well-being, whereas, according to the *mofa* theme, the same world should be steeped in utmost ignorance, sin, and misery.

III. *The Development of Eschatological Notions in Early Chinese Buddhism*

Since the fourth century of our era we can observe the formation of a Buddho-Daoist eschatology, in which the main actors—and in any case the person of the superhuman saviour himself—are of Buddhist origin, and in which conceptual, stylistic, and terminological elements are largely borrowed from popular Mahāyāna devotionalism. But even if most of the *dramatis personae* and much of the style and imagery are of Buddhist origin, it is clear that Daoism provided the model for the structure as a whole. It was the Daoist vision that provided a coherent complex of eschatological expectations into which all these disconnected Buddhist themes became incorporated and welded into an integrated whole, and it was also Daoism that filled some essential gaps by providing the materials for which there was no Buddhist counterpart: the apocalyptic battle, the
[11] judgement, and the creation of an ideal world.

1. *The Sources*

Unfortunately, our data are fragmentary, and often—as is to be expected in apocalyptic literature—extremely cryptic. Only little can be found in the great scriptural tradition of Chinese Buddhism—the translations of the major Mahāyāna *sūtras*; the scholastic literature, and the biographical compilations. These are, by and large, the products of a clerical establishment that closely collaborated with the temporal authorities, and fully shared the latter's aversion from wild prophesies and apocalyptic visions, as long as these did not serve the interests of the ruling élite. It should be stressed that the Chinese Buddhist canon is the final product of many centuries of clerical censorship, a continuous process of expurgation (and, in a number of known cases, even wholesale destruction) of "heretical" texts. We can only be grateful for the fact that, in spite of this censorship, at least some apocrypha have survived in the canon, either because they were not recognized as such, or because the content of such texts (or of interpolations inserted into translated scriptures) was considered harmless, or even beneficial.[15] To this oversight we owe the preservation

[15] The best general survey of Chinese Buddhist apocryphal literature is found in the introductory part (pp. 1–95) of Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮, *Gikyō kenkyū* 疑經研究, Kyōto, 1977. In her study on the messianic Dunhuang text *Taishang lingbao laozi hua hu mia jing* 太上靈寶老子化胡妙經, "Le Sūtra merveilleux du Ling-pao Suprême, traitant de Lao tseu qui

of such valuable apocrypha as the *Yulanpen jing* 盂蘭盆經 (T 685) which forms the scriptural basis of a well-known Chinese ritual; the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (T 1484) that has become the cathechism of Chinese lay Buddhism; and the extensive *Guanding jing* 灌頂經 (T 1331) that, like most apocrypha, poses as a "genuine" (i.e. translated) text, but actually constitutes an invaluable panorama of early medieval popular religion and demonology.

However, these are only poor remnants of what must have been a huge body of religious literature. Hundreds of titles of "suspected" or "false" scriptures are listed by Buddhist bibliographers (by way of warning example, as they invariably explain in their introductory statements and glosses)—in
[12] fact, such tantalizing entries, and the titles of the rejected texts themselves, constitute one of our most important sources of information. However, in this respect the importance of the Dunhuang manuscripts cannot be overestimated: it is, for once, an uncensored body of materials, and the fact that it contains so many dozens of Chinese Buddhist apocrypha—often in many different copies—allows us a glimpse of the great popularity and wide distribution of such texts that were excluded from the official canon. If this applies to Buddhist apocrypha in general, it is even more true of eschatological scriptures, which, for reasons to be treated below, were utterly condemned as dangerous and subversive. But for the Dunhuang materials, the subject could not be studied at all.

2. *Further Development of Buddhist Themes in China*

In the formation of a Buddho-Daoist eschatology in early medieval times, two themes appear to have been particularly productive: the transformation of Maitreya from a future Buddha into a Messiah; and the Chinese interpretations of the "End of the Doctrine". Both the figure of Maitreya and the beliefs connected with the three stages of doctrinal degeneration are subjects of great complexity to which we cannot do justice here; a few general remarks must suffice.

Maitreya in his twofold role as the great Bodhisattva who rules as divine king in the Tuṣita heaven and as the Buddha in the distant future

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convertit les barbares (TH. ms. S. 2081)—Contribution à l'étude du Bouddho-taoïsme des Six Dynasties" (to be published in M. Soymié, ed., *Contributions aux études sur Touen-houang*, vol. III), Anna Seidel has pointed out that a similar process of expurgation has taken place in Daoist religious literature, by the suppression of Daoist texts "qui ont dû être exclus du Canon à cause de leur caractère trop populaire, hétérodoxe ou subversif".

is the central topic of several *sūtras*, some of which had been translated
[13] into Chinese as early as the third century.[16] In the late fourth century we find the first traces of a specialised Maitreya cult in an educated Chinese clerical milieu.[17] A mass of information about the Maitreya devotion in all social strata is furnished by the epigraphical and iconographical materials, notably from the northern Chinese cave-temples of the late Nanbei-chao period; the datable evidence indicates that this type of devotionalism was especially popular in the first decades of the sixth century.[18]

However, it also shows that this cult was "orthodox"; i.e. it was based on the ideas and beliefs found in the original, translated scriptures related to the Maitreya cult (cf. note 16). The believers express the wish (often formalized as a regular "vow", *praṇidhāna, yuan* 願) to be reborn in the Tuṣita heaven, there to enjoy the Master's instructions and the pleasures of his paradise, and finally, in a very distant future, to be reborn in this world and to receive the double blessing of Maitreya's Buddhahood and of the virtuous rule of a *cakravartin* king.

But at the same time we find the first traces of another, alternative Maitreya cult, basically different from this common, canonical, "harmless" expectation of the next Buddha after millions of years. It is a complex of ideas in which messianic and eschatological notions appear to play an

[16] For a survey of Indian and Central Asian sources and modern studies about Maitreya, see Ét. Lamotte, *Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna* vol. I, Louvain, 1944, pp. 4–5, id., *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Louvain, 1967, pp. 775–788. For Maitreya as a religious instructor and inspirator, accessible through mental concentration, see P. Demiéville's remarks in *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 44, 1954, pp. 376–395. The theme of Maitreya's glorious existence in the Tuṣita heaven and how to "visualize" him is elaborated in T 452 觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經, trsl. by Juqu Jingsheng 沮渠京聲 (mid-5th cent.). That of Maitreya's future incarnation 下生 and his attainment of Buddhahood is set forth in a whole series of different versions (in part Mahāyānist expansions) of a text that in its Hīnayāna canonical form is found in the Chinese *Ekottarāgama* (T 125 增一阿含, trsl. Gautama Saṅghadeva, late 4th cent.), j. 44.3, pp. 787c–789c. The present Chinese canon contains three versions of this *Maitreya-vyākaraṇa* made during the Nanbei-chao: T 454 彌勒下生成佛經 (probably 5th cent.; wrongly attributed to Kumārajīva); T 456 彌勒大成佛經 (expanded version, trsl. by Kumārajīva; early 5th cent.); and T 457 彌勒來時經 (anon.; 5th cent.). These 5th century versions are preceded by T 453 彌勒下生經 attributed to the late 3rd century translator Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 (active ca. 280–308 CE), but this text is a literal replica of the *Ekottarāgama* version mentioned above, and certainly not the original Dharmarakṣa translation mentioned in *CSZJJ* (T 2145, j. 2, p. 8a). A different and much shorter treatment of Maitreya's *vyākaraṇa* is found in the anonymous (4th cent.) T 44 古來世時經, which in turn appears to be a reduced version of the *Pūrvāparāntakasūtra* (= T 26 *Madhyamāgama* 中阿含經, j. 13, pp. 508c–511c, trsl. Gautama Saṅghadeva, late 4th cent.).

[17] Cf. my *Buddhist Conquest*, pp. 194–195.

[18] Cf. Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, Princeton, 1964, p. 172.

important role. The decisive deviation from the common Maitreya devotion consisted in a chronological shift of the person of the saviour himself: Maitreya has been moved forward from an era of prosperity and happiness in the very distant future to an imminent period of decay and misery, which in turn is not only associated with the *mofa*, but also with the *kalpa*-disasters at the end of an aeon. Thus the benign Teacher is changed into a powerful Messiah who rescues the good people from the final holo-
[14] caust, and condemns the sinners. We apparently stand here at the very beginning of a special type of sectarian Buddhism, for this is the Maitreya who was to inspire messianic movements and Buddhist rebellions—a phenomenon that is attested from the late fifth century onward,[19] and that was to continue throughout Chinese history till modern times.

It cannot be doubted that this type of Maitreya-cult was considered subversive by the temporal authorities as well as by the clerical establishment. Small wonder: obviously no political regime could accept the idea that the *mofa* era was at hand, because that period is characterized, *inter alia*, by a cruel, corrupt and tyrannical government, and the established church could not approve it either, because in *mofa* texts the traditional *saṅgha* is invariably described as degenerate, ignorant, and indulging in all kinds of forbidden practices.

If we look at the titles of messianic Maitreya scriptures listed in Buddhist bibliographies since the sixth century, it is evident that Maitreya is associated with all the main eschatological themes. We see how Maitreya "is incarnated in order to separate the sinners and the happy ones" (彌勒下生甄別罪福經)[20] and "to save (his devotees) from suffering and danger" (彌勒下生救度苦厄經),[21] or even, with a clear reference to the disasters at the end of an aeon, "to rescue them from the great *kalpa*-holocaust, when the three catastrophes arise" (救度大劫燒三災起經).[22] He overcomes the demon (彌勒下生伏魔經),[23] and, like the Saviour in the Daoist tradition, he sends his helpers to prepare his work of salvation—in this case the

[19] For the "Buddhist rebels" of this period see the detailed account given by Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆 in his *Shina bukkyōshi kenkyū* 支那佛教史研究 (*Hoku-Gi hen* 北魏篇), Tokyo, 1942; for later "Maitreya rebels" see Shigematsu Toshiaki 重松俊章, "Tō-Sō-jidai no Miroku kyōhi" 君宋時代の彌勒教匪, *Shi'en* 史渊 3, 1931, pp. 68–103.

[20] T 2153 大周刊定衆經目錄, j. 15, p. 474b.

[21] Ib., p. 474a.

[22] Ib., p. 474b.

[23] T 2146 衆經目錄 by Fajing 法經 and others, j. 2, p. 126c.

Bodhisattvas Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) and Dashizhi (Mahāsthāmaprāpta) (彌勒下生遣觀世音大勢至勸化衆生捨悪作善壽樂經).[24]

Of course the official Buddhist bibliographers made it quite clear that they condemned such heretical pamphlets. Fajing 法經, the chief compiler [15] of the state-sponsored Buddhist bibliography of 594 CE, concludes his list of "spurious texts" with the comment that these works contain false prophecies, and indulge in speculations about *yin* and *yang* and in weird stories about ghosts and demons: "their false and evil character is obvious; they must be removed from circulation, in order to safeguard the world from harm".[25] Another official clerical bibliographer mentions the fact that at the beginning of the Sui dynasty a great number of such "false and extravagant" (僞濫) texts, amounting to 300 *juan*, have been confiscated and burnt; however, in spite of this salutary action such works are still circulating among the people.[26] The most essential point—the shift of Maitreya to a time of imminent crisis—is of course unacceptable. After having listed a number of subversive Maitreya-*sūtras*, Zhisheng 智昇, the compiler of the invaluable *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* of 730 exclaims:

> The four scriptures mentioned above all are fakes fabricated by evil heretics; they speak, among other things, about the incarnation of the Tathāgata Maitreya in the immediate future. I may remark that according to the orthodox *sūtras* the Tathāgata Maitreya will only appear after fifty-seven *koti* and six million years after Śākyamuni's Nirvāṇa,[27] when the human life-span on this continent of Jambudvīpa will have increased to 80,000 years. How then could he descend (at the present time), when our lifespan has diminished to one hundred years? With such false and evil talk they mislead the stupid

[24] T 2154 開元釋教錄, j. 18, p. 672c; cf. also T 2146 衆經目錄 j. 2, p. 126c: 彌勒下生觀世音施珠寶經.

[25] T 2146 衆經目錄, j. 2, p. 127c.

[26] T 2149 大唐内典錄, j. 10, p. 333c.

[27] The same time-span of 576 million years (one *koṭi* equals ten million) is mentioned in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* 俱舍論, T 1545, j. 135, p. 698b. It there relates to another element of Maitreya lore that occasionally also plays a role in Chinese Buddhist eschatology: the belief that the great disciple Kāśyapa after the Buddha's decease did not realize Nirvāṇa, but in accordance with the Buddha's instructions let himself be enclosed inside the Kukkuṭapāda mountain. He will stay there for fifty-seven *koṭi* and six million years in the state of suspended animation called "concentration of suppression" (*nirodha-samāpatti, miejinding* 滅盡定), to emerge again at the time of Maitreya, to whom he will hand Śākyamuni's upper garment as a token of spiritual succession. However, whilst steeped in this concentration he is able to manifest himself in this world and to act as a protector of the *dharma*—a role which he came to share with a varying number of other disciples (for which see S. Lévi and E. Chavannes, "Les seize Arhat protecteurs de la Loi", *Journal Asiatique* 198, 1916, pp. 5–50 and 189–304, and Et. Lamotte, *Histoire*, pp. 768–770). The story occurs in several scriptures, but to my knowledge the number of 567 million is only mentioned in the *Vibhāṣā*.

crowd; among the ignorant rabble there are many who follow them and credulously accept (such beliefs), and because of this fall (into sin and) are lost. One may truly call (such texts) harmful.[28]

[16] In this case, official censorship has been successful, for as far as I know the four Maitreya scriptures branded as subversive by Zhisheng have disappeared completely. However, as we shall see, Dunhuang has yielded at least one complete text that shows us Maitreya amidst the horrors of the Last Judgement.

The forward shift of Maitreya was not the only change in a Buddhist theme that was made to adapt it to current apocalyptic expectations. At least as important was the combination of two other Buddhist notions that, as we have seen above, in their original context had not been associated with each other: the belief in the catastrophes that will destroy our world at the end of a great aeon, and the final stage of religious degeneration characterized by the disappearance of the Doctrine (*mofa*). The idea that the Way of Salvation was fading away, and, more specifically, that it did so in three stages (*sanjie* 三階), has made a very deep impression in early medieval Chinese Buddhist circles. The general misery and devastation wrought by warfare and exploitation, and probably also the widespread abuses within the Buddhist clergy, in any case made it clear that the "counterfeit Doctrine" made itself felt. But certain happenings—notably the two short-lived but violent repressions of Buddhism under some of the northern dynasties—could easily lead to the frightening thought that even that phase had run its course, and that the world was soon to enter the *mofa* period. The Sui chronicler Fei Changfang 費長房 may be right when he attributes the upsurge of *mofa* belief to the impression made by the persecutions of 446–454 (under Emperor Wu of the Northern Wei) and of 574–577 (launched by the Northern Zhou emperor Wu).[29] In any case, this *mofa* belief was destined to have far-reaching consequences. This is not the place to go into this very complicated subject.[30] It has stimulated

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[28] T 2154 開元釋教錄 j. 18, p. 672c.

[29] T 2034 歷代三寶記 j. 12, p. 107b. It is interesting to note how, many centuries earlier, the belief in the disappearance of the Doctrine in northwestern India had been stimulated by the devastations caused by the successive invasions of Scythians (Śaka), Greeks (Yavana), Parthians (Pahlava), and Yuezhi; cf. J. Przyluski, op. cit., pp. 162–163.

[30] For the early phase of "*mofa* thought" in China see Yūki Reimon 結城令聞, "Shina Bukkyō ni okeru mappō-shisō no kōki" 支那佛教に於ける末法思想の興起, *Tōhō gakuhō* (Tokyo), 6, 1936, pp. 205–216. For Sui and Tang developments see Takao Giken 高雄義堅, *Chūgoku Bukkyō shiron* 中國佛教史論, Kyoto, 1952, esp. pp. 54–96; "Mappō shisō to Zui Tō shoka no taido" 末法思想と隋唐諸家の態度.

[17] very important doctrinal innovations, because one of the conclusions drawn from the expectation of an approaching *mofa* era was that in this degenerate world Buddhism could no longer be practised in its original, complicated and "difficult" form, and that there was, consequently, the need for a simple and direct way to salvation. It is well-known how this basic idea played an important role in the formation and development of the two great devotional movements in Chinese Buddhism: the Pure Land (Jingtu 浄土) School, founded by Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542), and the remarkable pantheism of the School of the Three Stages (*Sanjie* 三階) that was established by Xinxing 信行 (540–594), and that was eventually proscribed on account of its "heretical" ideas and practices.[31]

Chinese Buddhist apocrypha very often contain detailed descriptions of the moral degeneration that prevails in the "last period" (*moshi* 末世; *mohoushi* 末後世). It is interesting to note that the sectarian groups from which such texts originate apparently were opposed to the established *saṅgha* of their time, which forms the main target of their criticism: according to these texts, the world as a whole is steeped in sin, but especially the church has become little more than a pack of swindlers and hypocrites. It is surprising to see how the abuses listed by these anonymous spokesmen of a "contestant church" completely agree with the well-known diatribes of anti-Buddhist polemicists (and, we may add, to the conclusions of modern historians): abysmal ignorance and even illiteracy among the monks; worthless ordinations; moral misbehaviour; monasteries hiding fugitives from justice and engaging in all kinds of commercial activities; deforestation of the countryside; usury; close relations between monks and unscrupulous officials, useless luxury, the exploitation of the common people by means of magic tricks, etcetera.[32] Thus, these texts (even if they pretend to be prophecies concerning a "last period" that is
[18] still to come) actually present a fascinating panorama of the dark side of Chinese Buddhist monasticism, and therefore are historical documents of great value, apart from their purely religious significance.

But the degeneration of the *saṅgha* takes place in a wider context: in the *mofa* period, the world is stricken by famine, epidemics and natural

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[31] The most exhaustive and still unsurpassed study of the sect of the Three Stages is Yabuki Keiki 矢吹慶輝, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū* 三階教の研究, Tokyo, 1927.

[32] Some examples: T 395 當來變經 (attributed to Dharmarakṣa, third cent.?), pp. 118a–c; T 396 法滅盡經 (anon.; 5th cent.?); T 245 仁王般若波羅蜜經 (wrongly attributed to Kumārajīva), j. 2, pp. 833b–c; T 1331 灌頂經 (wrongly attributed to Śrīmitra; probably compiled in the fifth century, but including 4th cent. material), j. 1, p. 497c; T 2085 像法決疑經 (anon.; probably 6th cent.; cf. Makita Tairyō, *Gikyō kenkyū*; cf. above, note 15), p. 306.

disasters; the government is cruel and corrupt; punishments are heavy and arbitrary. We can understand that, as in the case of the timing of Maitreya's incarnation, neither the temporal authorities nor the clerical establishment were eager to accept the idea that the final era was imminent, or even had already begun. Hence, the question at what time the *mofa* era was to start was of great ideological importance.

In our survey of Daoist eschatology we have seen that in Daoist scriptures of this type (as in Chinese prophetic literature in general) the beginning of the crisis and the appearance of the messiah are indicated in seemingly exact ways, either by combinations of cyclical signs belonging to the sexagenary cycle, or by indicating the number of years that have elapsed since a certain point in time ("forty-six cycles after Yao"). The latter method was the one used in Buddhist computations, since the chronological starting-point always was the date of the Buddha's *Parinirvāṇa*. However, chronological computation was hampered—and, at the same time, made more flexible—by two factors: the lack of unanimity regarding the date of the Buddha's birth (from which that of his decease could easily be derived, for all Buddhist traditions agree in according the Buddha a life-span of eighty years), and the fact that there were different opinions about the length of the phases that precede the *mofa*.

As regards the date of the Buddha's birth, quite a number of widely different opinions were held in early medieval China—a late sixth century author lists no less than seven, varying from 1173 to 467 BCE,[33] and,
[19] consequently, yielding dates for the Buddha's *Parinirvāṇa* that range from 1094 to 388 BCE. However, most of these are based on isolated and obscure sources, and never became popularized. During the Nanbei-chao period, only two ways of dating were widely used; both were based on

[33] Fei Changfang 費長房, in T 2034 歷代三寶記 (597 CE), j. 1. p. 25a. Another system of computation, not listed by Fei Changfang, is found in T 1933 南嶽思大禪師立誓願文, the solemn Vow formulated by the famous Huisi 慧思 (515–577), the popular and highly controversial preacher who also was the teacher of Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597), the founder of the Pure Land school. Huisi, who actually was persecuted by his own fellow-monks because of his heretical ideas, was one of the few preachers who openly declared that the world had already entered the Final Period. In this dramatic document (pp. 786c–787c), he states that he was born "in the 82nd year of the *mofa*"; from his computation the following scheme can be distilled: (1) the *Parinirvāṇa* took place in 1068 BCE; (2) the period of the True Doctrine lasted from 1067 to 568 BCE; (3) the period of the Counterfeit Doctrine lasted a thousand years (567 BCE–433 CE), and (4) the *mofa* had started in *the jiaxu* 甲戌 year (434 CE). For the influence of *mofa* thought on Huisi cf. Paul Magnin, *La vie et l'œuvre de Huisi* (515–577), Paris, 1979, esp. pp. 113–116, and Yoshio Kawakatsu, "A propos de la pensée de Huisi", in *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 69 (1981), pp. 96–105.

supposed references to the Buddha's birth in ancient Chinese chronicles.[34] Till the end of the fifth century, it was generally held that the Buddha had been born in the tenth year of the Zhou king Zhuang (686 BCE), according to which his *Parinirvāṇa* would have taken place in 607 BCE. In the sixth century, preference was generally given to a much earlier date for the Buddha's birth, corresponding to the twenty-fourth year of king Zhao (1029 BCE according to the traditional chronology; 958 BCE according to the chronology of the *Bamboo Annals* on which this synchronism was originally based). Hence, according to this somewhat later system, the *Parinirvāṇa* was placed in 879 or 950 BCE. Thus, the diversity of chronological starting-points itself already offered ample space for different computations regarding the beginning of each of the Three Phases.

But also the length of each of these phases was a matter of controversy. In general, four schemes were current, for each of which excellent scriptural support could be adduced:

(1) True Doctrine: 500 years; Counterfeit Doctrine: 500 years.
(2) True Doctrine: 500 years; Counterfeit Doctrine: 1,000 years.
(3) True Doctrine: 1,000 years; Counterfeit Doctrine: 500 years.
(4) True Doctrine: 1,000 years; Counterfeit Doctrine: 1,000 years.

In addition, a number of other, deviating schemes were known, but they never became popular.[35]

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[34] Cf. my *Buddhist Conquest*, pp. 271–274.

[35] The starting-point of the schemes based on various combinations of the numbers 500 and 1,000 must be sought in the old tradition, according to which the Buddha himself, when (reluctantly, and only after Ānanda's repeated requests) admitting females into the Order, prophesied that due to this measure the True Law would only remain for five hundred years, instead of the one thousand years that it otherwise would have lasted (references to this famous episode in E. Lamotte, *Traité*, vol. I, p. 95). Apart from the schemes using multiples of 500, we find some other constructions: a gradual degeneration lasting ten centuries, each century constituting a further step downward (T 390 佛臨涅槃記法住經, trsl. Xuanzang); three phases lasting, respectively, 80, 800, and 8,000 years (T 245, the apocryphal 仁王般若波羅蜜經 wrongly attributed to Kumārajīva); destruction of the True Doctrine by Māra the Evil One 700 years after the *Parinirvāṇa*, in the three versions of the (Mahāyāna) *Parinirvāṇa-sūtra* (T 374, j. 7, p. 402a; T 375, j. 7, p. 643b; T 376, j. 4, p. 880a), a scheme that is also adopted by the apocryphal T 2879 普賢菩薩說證明經, for which see below. For the curious interpretation of this aberrant prophecy in the *Commentary on the Dayun jing* (大雲經神皇授記義疏), in 690 CE presented to Empress Wu in order to provide a Buddhist justification of her rule as a woman, see Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century*, Naples, 1976, p. 213.

[20] If we confine ourselves to the first two schemes that were by far the most common, and combine these with the dates most widely accepted for the Buddha's decease (i.e. the supposed birth-date plus eighty years), we obtain the following set of possible dates for the beginning of the dreaded Final Phase:

(1)	1,000 years after Zhao 24, + 80	= 50 CE
(2)	id. (according to the chronology of the *Bamboo Annals*)	= 121 CE
(3)	1,000 years after Zhuang 10, + 80	= 392 CE
(4)	1,500 years after Zhao 24, + 80	= 550 CE
(5)	id. (according to the chronology of the *Bamboo Annals*)	= 621 CE
(6)	1,500 years after Zhuang 10, + 80	= 993 CE

For the Nanbei-chao period two of these dates are relevant: 392 CE and 550 CE. Both appear to be very significant, because we know from other sources that precisely around those two dates eschatological expectations reached a climax, not only in Buddhist circles but also in Daoism. As we have seen, it was around the middle of the sixth century that an upsurge of *mofa* belief led to the formation of new popular movements in Chinese Buddhism. But even more striking is the correspondence between Buddhist and Daoist eschatological expectations focused on the year 392, which is not only one of the possible dates for the beginning of the *mofa* phase, but also exactly the fateful year *renchen*, in which the Daoist messiah Li Hong was to appear![36]

[21] One of the decisive steps in the formation of Buddho-Daoist eschatology was the original combination of *mofa* (which originally simply implied a state of moral degeneration and increased suffering) and the idea of "*kalpa*-disasters" (meaning the physical destruction of our world),

[36] Since the Buddhist calculation is based on the assumption that the Buddha was born on the eighth day of the fourth month of the tenth year of the Zhou king Zhuang, which assumption in turn was derived from an entry in the *Chunqiu* and *Zuojuan* (seventh year of Duke Zhuang of Lu, cf. my *Buddhist Conquest*, p. 272), the *renchen* year 392 CE was a fixed date that could not be altered; this way of computing is, moreover, attested as early as the first half of the third century. It would therefore be tempting to conclude that the Buddhist theory about the beginning of the *mofa* phase in that year was taken over by the Daoists, and used as the basis of their own eschatological expectations. However, the chance of mere coincidence can never be excluded—after all, the early Jesuit missionaries in Ming China taught their converts that Jesus Christ had been crucified and resurrected from the grave "in the eighth year of the Han emperor Wu"—which is a *renchen* year! (cf. Luigi Buglio 利類思 and Ferdinand Verbiest 南懷仁, *Bu de yi bian* 不得已辯, 1665, ed. *Zhongguo shixue congshu*, p. 296).

and fixing the date of this total catastrophe, either by computations of the "x years after the *Parinirvāṇa*" type, or by a combination of cyclical characters. Thus, some recorded titles of apocryphal scriptures (the texts themselves have unfortunately been lost) refer to "the great deluge of the
[22] year *jiashen* (甲申年大水; 甲申年洪災大水),[37] and in other prophecies the cataclysm is expected to take place in the two successive years *shen* 申 and *yu* 酉 (cf. below p. 38 and note 70). Such predictions were of course considered highly subversive by worldly and clerical authorities alike, and we can understand why Fajing, commenting upon one of the three texts mentioned above, exclaims: "Even at a first glance this scripture appears to be the summit of weirdness and fraud!"[38]

The same original combination of *mofa*, the end of our world, and the emergence of a superhuman saviour at a certain date, and even at a certain place, forms the basic pattern of the apocalyptic lore that grew up around the Bodhisattva Yueguang tongzi, to whom we shall turn now.

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[37] *CSZJJ* (518 CE) already lists a group of three apocrypha (T 2145, j. 5, p. 39a) which appear to have had as their common theme the appearance of the saviour Candraprabha (月光), connected with a prophecy concerning the Buddha's almsbowl, the deluge of the *jiashen* year, and the descent of Maitreya:

(1) *Prophecy about the visualization of the Bodhisattva Yueguang*; one *juan* 觀月光菩薩記一卷;
(2) *Prophecy* (or "*Scripture*" 經 acc. to the Korean recension) *about the Buddha's almsbowl* 佛鉢記 (note by Sengyou: "It foretells the great deluge of the year *jiashen* and the appearance of the Bodhisattva Yueguang 記甲申年大水及月光菩薩出事);
(3) [*The scripture of*] *Maitreya's descent and teachings*, in one *juan* 彌勒下教一卷 (note by Sengyou: "Appended to the *Almsbowl Prophecy*" 在鉢記後).

The second text was different from the apocryphal *Scripture about the huge disasters and great deluge of the jiashen year* 甲申年洪災大水經 mentioned in the early Tang *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* (T 2154, j. 18, p. 673a), for the compiler notes that the two texts are not the same. The date of the group of apocrypha listed by Sengyou is difficult to determine; since they did not figure in Dao'an's 道安 late fourth century bibliography that Sengyou has incorporated *in toto* into his *CSZJJ*, they probably date from the fifth, or the very beginning of the sixth century. In that case the *jiashen* year could be 444 CE or 504 CE (or, since we are dealing with a comfortably flexible system of prophetic dating, any later year following 504 CE with a sixty-year interval). However that may be, the choice of the *jiashen* year is certainly of Daoist provenance. In TT 442 上清後聖道君列紀, a text that probably belongs to the original Maoshan corpus of the late fourth century, we find (p. 3^{b}) that the *jiashen* year marks the beginning of the Judgement, and in several other Daoist scriptures it is explicitly associated with the great deluge, e.g. TT 335 神呪經 j. 2, p. 2^{b} and p. 8^{b}; j. 5, p. 2^{a}; the original 上清三天正法經 quoted in TT 1032 雲笈七籤 j. 2, p. 7^{a}; *Taipingjing* 甲部, ed. Wang Ming, p. 4.

[38] T 2146 衆經目錄 j. 2, p. 127a: 略觀此經妖妄之甚.

IV. *Prince Moonlight—The Remarkable Career of an Obscure Bodhisattva*

Candraprabha-kumāra definitely does not belong to the small group of great Bodhisattvas who are well-known both from literature and from religious art—in fact, I have been unable to find a single image of him in Buddhist iconography. Buddhist biographical literature does not mention any specialized cult devoted to him; it only contains one single reference to his saving power, describing how the monk Zhizao 智璪 in 571 CE was restored to health by an apparition of the Bodhisattva Yueguang.[39]

However, he does play a modest role in non-Chinese Buddhist lore. Apart from the occurrence of his name in lists of Bodhisattvas present
[23] in some other Mahāyāna scriptures,[40] he is best known for his role in a short *sūtra* that has been preserved in several Chinese versions. The first one dates from the late third century (T 534 *Yueguang tongzi jing* 月光童子經, trsl. by Dharmarakṣa); it is followed in the Canon by an anonymous translation, probably of the fifth century (T 535 *Shenri jing* 申日經) and by a very short recension translated by Guṇabhadra around 440 CE (T 536 *Shenri er ben jing* 申日兒本經). The latest still extant Chinese translation was made by Narendrayaśas in 583 CE (T 545 *Dehu zhangzhe jing* 德護長者經) from a much more developed recension of the Indian scripture.[41]

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39 T 2060 續高僧傳 j. 19, p. 585b.

40 Cf. T 262, Kumārajīva's translation of the *Lotus Sūtra*, p. 2a (the current Sanskrit text reads Ratnaprabha "Jewel-light", which is confirmed by Dharmarakṣa's older translation, T 263, p. 63a; but Kumārajīva's reading probably is the correct one, as the name Candraprabha here occurs, in accordance with a well-known Mahāyāna convention, between other names containing *candra* "moon": 寶月 Ratnacandra, and 滿月 Pūrṇacandra); further T 398 大方等大集經 (Dharmakṣema, ca. 420 CE), p. 132a; T 656 菩薩瓔珞經 (Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, 2nd half 4th cent.), p. 1b. A more prominent role is played by Candraphrabha as main interlocutor of the Buddha in Narendrayaśas' translation of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* T 639 月燈三昧經 (Sui), p. 549a sqq, which also contains the story of his *vyākaraṅa* (j. 3, p. 567b, cf. below), and as a singer of stanzas in praise of the Buddha in a later Tantric text, T 402 寶星陀羅尼經 (trsl. Prabhāmitra, ca. 630 CE), j. 6, p. 565c.

41 The successive Buddhist bibliographies mention a great number of versions with varying titles. Some of these are attributed to well-known translators, other versions are anonymous, and several are listes as "lost" at an early date. For the extremely complicated problem of those different versions and attributions see Hayashiya Tomojirō 林屋友次郎, *Iyaku kyōrui no kenkyū* 異譯經類の研究, Tokyo, 1945, chpt. 8 (pp. 410–435). For the earliest versions cf. also my *Buddhist Conquest* p. 437, n. 130. I must correct the statement, made there, that T 535 probably was translated by Zhi Qian 支謙 in the third century: the so-called Zhi Qian version mentioned in Buddhist bibliographies appears to be identical with T 169 月明菩薩經, in which a young man named Candraprabha (月明童男, trscr. as 栴羅法) does figure, but the content of this short *avadāna* is totally different from that of the group of scriptures in question.

There is nothing in this short *sūtra* to make it stand out from the great mass of minor Buddhist scriptures containing pious stories (*avadāna*), of which there are hundreds in the Buddhist canon. In this case, the main personage is a depraved householder named Śrīgupta (trscr. 申日; trsl. 德護), who has a moral counterpart in his virtuous son, the sixteen-year old Yueguang. At the instigation of heretical masters, Śrīgupta digs a pitfall filled with fire, and then invites the Buddha to a meal in order to let him perish in it. The young Yueguang discovers the plot; he remonstrates with his father, and implores him not to carry out his plan, but to no avail. When the Buddha arrives, he naturally knows the father's evil intention, and changes the fire-pit into a lotus pond. Śrīgupta is deeply ashamed; his heart is changed, and he is converted on the spot. The theme—a pious son desperately trying to keep his father from committing a mortal sin—no doubt appealed to the Chinese public, and accounts for the many successive translations made of this short scripture.

In the original Indian text the main subject is Śrīgupta's plot and his
[24] conversion through a miracle; the young Yueguang plays a secondary role as a remonstrant, and then disappears from the story. However, in two of the extant four Chinese versions—the anonymous fifth century text, and the Sui version by Narendrayaśas—the conversion is followed by a *vyākaraṇa*: the Buddha utters an elaborate prophecy concerning Candraprabha's future lives and his eventual attainment of Buddhahood. This is of course a well-known *cliché* occurring in innumerable Mahāyāna scriptures. But in these two cases there can be no doubt that we have to do with apocryphal interpolations of Chinese origin.

In the anonymous *Shenri jing* (T 535) the Buddha declares that a thousand years after the *Parinirvāṇa*, when the canonical doctrine is about to disappear, Yueguang tongzi will be reborn in China (Qin guo 秦國)[42] as a saintly ruler. He will revive the True Doctrine in all the Western Regions and among the surrounding barbarians. They will be converted in great numbers, and all who listen to the words of this scripture will be saved from sin.[43]

[42] In early Buddhist translations, the term Qin 秦 is regularly used for "China", without any special reference to the Former or Later (Proto-Tibetan) Qin dynasties that ruled part of northern China in the late fourth and early fifth century. Cf. P. Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, Paris, 1959, p. 268 sqq s.v. "Cīn"; A. F. P. H. Hulsewé and M. Loewe, *China in Central Asia—The early stage: 125 B.C.–A.D. 23;* Leiden, 1979, p. 169 n. 546 and p. 232 n. 898.

[43] T 535, p. 819a.

Thus we see how Yueguang, here promoted to the status of Bodhisattva, is associated with holy kingship, the final period of the Doctrine, and with China.

It is difficult to say how old this complex is, but the first traces of it in Chinese literature clearly antedate the fifth century *Shenri jing* interpolation. Yueguang's special relation with China is for the first time alluded to around the middle of the fourth century, in the "Ode to Yueguang tongzi" 月光童子讚 (*Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集, T 2103, j. 15, p. 197c), a piece of extremely obscure "metaphysical poetry" written by the famous scholar-monk and *xuanxue* 玄學 specialist Zhi Dun 支遁 (314–366). It is one of a series of thirteen eulogies written in the highly rhetorical and obscurantistic style that is characteristic of this genre. The first two, inspired by icons (*xiang* 像) representing Śākyamuni and Amitābha, are much longer than the other ones that are devoted to eleven Bodhisattvas, most of whom are well-known from Mahāyāna scriptures. The one describing the supernatu-
[25] ral powers and compassion of Prince Moonlight does not explicitly refer to his actual appearance in China, either as a saviour or as an ideal ruler. However, it does state that "His beautiful (bodily) form flowered in India, and his fame is propagated in the region of the Red District (i.e. China)" 英姿秀乾竺, 名播赤縣鄉, and this reference to China, combined with the fact that throughout the ode no allusion is made to Candraprabha's original role as described in the *Shenri jing*, makes it probable that Zhi Dun was hinting at some tradition about Yueguang's special significance for China—in fact, if this were not the case, it is hard to understand why he should have singled out this very obscure Bodhisattva for being eulogized, along with such great saviours as Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, and Vimalakīrti.

However, the first explicit reference to Yueguang's appearance in China in secular literature still dates from Zhi Dun's lifetime. The *Gaoseng zhuan* contains a fragment from a letter written by Xi Zuochi 習鑿齒 to the famous scholar-monk Dao'an, and in this document, dated 365 CE, the writer, after having extolled the beneficial influence of Dao'an's wisdom and piety, exclaims "Yueguang will appear, and the supernatural Almsbowl is to descend!" 月光將出, 靈鉢應降.[44] Again, no further details are added, but in this case the author clearly alludes to the appearance of Yueguang in China, as the result of Dao'an's activities that have prepared the way to his coming. It is furthermore to be noted that in this very early reference the appearance of Prince Moonlight is already coupled with a

[44] *Gaoseng zhuan*, T 2109, j. 4, p. 352b.

tradition concerning the "descent" of the Buddha's almsbowl, to which we shall revert later. Another attempt to connect Yueguang tongzi with China, probably also older than this *Shenri jing* version, is the remarkable identification of this Bodhisattva with Confucius' young disciple Yan Hui 顏回 that occurs in a quotation from the (lost) apocryphal *Qingjing Faxing jing* 淸净法行經.[45]

But this theme is even more clearly brought forward, and in this case associated with a well-known Chinese ruler, in another apocryphal passage which we find in Narendrayaśas' translation of 583 CE. Here the Buddha prophesies that in the final era of the Doctrine, on the continent of Jambudvīpa, in the country of the Great Sui, Yueguang will be a powerful
[26] ruler named Daxing 大行. He will make Buddhism flourish throughout his realm, and be renowned for his personal devotion. He will venerate the Buddha's Alms-bowl that at that time will be brought to the land of Sui from Kashgar (Shale 沙勒). He will patronize Buddhism on a grandiose scale, notably by the reproduction and spread of holy texts, the making of Buddha images of every kind, and the establishment of countless Buddhist sanctuaries in all parts of the empire.[46]

Considering the date of Narendrayaśas' translation and some details given in this prediction, no doubt is possible about the identity of Yueguang's *avatāra* in the person of "Emperor Daxing". The interpolation is a piece of political propaganda on behalf of the Sui emperor Wen, whose effort to incorporate Buddhist beliefs into the hybrid ideology justifying his rule is well-known. It may well be that Narendrayaśas himself was responsible for inserting this passage into his translation, which he made only one year after he had been summoned by Yang Jian 楊堅 himself to the Daxing shan si 大興善寺—the most prestigious Buddhist institution in the empire, situated next to the palace in the newly built capital—to perform his translation work under imperial auspices. However, the text clearly refers to Wendi's most grandiose act of politically inspired Buddhist piety: the building of hundreds of relic-shrines all over the country, in imitation of King Aśoka, and this only took place in the year 601. The interpolation may therefore have been made at that date, or somewhat later. I have no explanation for the curious fact that the Sui emperor is named Daxing, "Great Practice". At first sight it would be tempting to relate it to the name of the Sui imperial city, Daxing 大興, but such an

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45 Cf. *Buddhist Conquest*, pp. 314–315.
46 T 545, j. 2, p. 849b sqq.

association is untenable in view of the Middle Chinese pronunciation of the two characters now read *xing* (行: **χiəng*; 興: **γɒng*).

However, the political role of Yueguang in support of temporal rulers still had to reach its climax. In the early Tang we see him emerge again, this time as part of the Buddhist propaganda by means of which Empress Wu tried to legitimize her position as a woman on the throne. In a lengthy interpolation in the *Ratnamegha-sūtra* (T 660 *Baoyun jing* 寶雲經, trsl. by Dharmaruci)—itself no doubt an authentic translated scripture—Yueguang is foretold that in the final phase of the Doctrine he will be reborn in the country of Great China (摩訶支那國, Mahācīna), in the northeastern part of Jambudvīpa, as a powerful female monarch.
[27] She will rule with wisdom and kindness, build many Buddhist temples, and provide the clergy with large endowments. Peace and prosperity will prevail. After a long life she will be reborn in the Tuṣita heaven and join the company of Maitreya.[47]

In all these cases Yueguang's role is ambiguous. He appears in a time of crisis, when the end of the Doctrine is approaching, and he has some traits of a saviour; yet we cannot call him a true messiah. He rather figures as a great revivalist. He restores for a certain period the Doctrine to its pristine glory, but afterwards it is still doomed to disappear.

This role of Yueguang as a temporary saviour is even more clearly expressed in a short apocryphal text, the *Sūtra of the annihilation of the Doctrine, Fa miejin jing* 法滅盡經 (T 396; probably fifth century).[48] The text first describes the general moral degeneration of society, and par-

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[47] T 660, j. 1, p. 284a. This interpolation has been studied by Antonino Forte, op. cit., pp. 125–136, as it forms one of the main ingredients of the "Commentary" submitted to Empress Wu in 690 CE. However, he has not paid attention to the importance of Yueguang in Chinese prophetic and eschatological literature.

[48] The various Buddhist bibliographies, starting with Sengyou's early sixth century *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (T 2145, p. 23c), contain many entries dealing with various versions of a *Fa miejin jing*, also called *Fa mojin jing* 法沒盡經 and *Kongji pusa suo wen jing* 空寂菩薩所問經. For the bibliographical details see my article "Eschatology and Messianism in Early Chinese Buddhism", in *Leyden Studies in Sinology*, Leiden, 1982, p. 48, n. 20, where I have also presented a more extensive account of the content of this scripture. In the sixth century, the *Fa miejin jing* must have been quite influential. It is regularly quoted in contemporary literature and Sengyou himself considered it important enough to include almost its whole text in section 34 of his compilation *Shijia pu* 釋迦譜 (T 2040, pp. 83c–84b). The controversial preacher Huisi 慧思 (515–577) also clearly refers to it in his "Written Vow" (T 1933, p. 786c; cf. note 33), adding the interesting detail—not contained in the original *Fa miejin jing*—that Yueguang's appearance in China (眞丹國) will take place 9,800 years after the beginning of the *mofa* period, which, according to his own system of computation, would correspond to the year 9497 CE.

ticularly of the Buddhist church, in the last phase of the Doctrine. There will be great disasters, and the government authorities will be corrupt and ruthless. Then the catastrophes break out. Most sinners will be swallowed by the deluge; the few remaining sages withdraw into the mountains. At that moment the Bodhisattva Yueguang appears; as a saintly ruler he once more revives the True Doctrine. But after that last splendour that will last fifty-two years, the process of decay continues; one after
[28] another the sacred scriptures vanish from this world,[49] and mankind is steeped in spiritual darkness: "At the time of the disappearance of my Doctrine, it will be like an oil-lamp, that shines even more brightly when it is about to expire—and then it is extinguished".[50] It may be added that the idea of a last revival even in the final era is also found elsewhere in Buddhist scriptures.[51]

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[49] The idea that in the final phase the sacred scriptures spontaneously disappear, or are transported elsewhere, is attested in "authentic" Buddhist scriptures, e.g. T 383 *Mahāmāyā-sūtra* 摩訶摩耶經 (trsl. Tanjing 曇景, late 5th cent.), j. 2, p. 114a: in the end, after 1,500 years, when the Doctrine is about to vanish, all scriptures spontaneously come together in Kuśinagara, and are from there taken into the sea by the *nāga*-king Sāgara. In the apocryphal *sūtra* quoted here, the order of disappearance is puzzling: fifty-two years after the coming of Yueguang, the *Śūraṃgama-sūtra* and the *Pratyutpannasamādhi-sūtra* will be the first to vanish; they will then be followed by all other scriptures (T 396, p. 1117b). However, the belief concerning the final disappearance of the scriptures is also found in the Daoist tradition, cf. TT 23 太上諸天靈書度命妙經 pp. 14[b]–15[a], and TT 532 太極真人靈寶齋戒威儀諸經要訣 p. 20[a].

[50] T 396, p. 1119b: 吾法滅時譬如油燈臨欲滅時光明更盛於是便滅.

[51] According to the apocryphal T 1331 灌頂經 j. 1, p. 497c, a thousand years after the *Parinirvāṇa* the Doctrine will be revived by the saviour-monk Puji 普濟, after the latter has rediscovered the text of this scripture, written in gold on sandalwood strips, and encased in a jewelled box, in the cave where it had lain concealed since it had disappeared from this world 700 years earlier. Yueguang himself is also mentioned as a powerful protector, together with his near-namesake Yueming 月明, in a short exorcistic apocryphal text from Dunhuang (S. 418 and S. 2617, 呪魅經, = T 2882). In the (probably authentic) T 390 佛臨涅槃記法住經 (trsl. Xuanzang), p. 1113c, it is explicitly said that all those who make the Doctrine flourish in the phase of final degeneration actually are manifestations of Bodhisattvas.

The same picture of decay, interrupted by a temporary revival under the rule of Yueguang, is presented by another short apocryphal text that, unlike the *Fa miejin jing*, has only been preserved in a Dunhuang manuscript studied by Makita Tairyō: the *Sūtra of the Ten Changes* (i.e. the ten stages of degeneration) *of the Clergy after the Parinirvāṇa* 般泥洹後比丘十變經 (S. 2109; cf. Makito Tairyō, op. cit., pp. 61–62). It probably also dates from the fifth century. When the True Doctrine (that in this scheme apparently only lasts three centuries) has come to an end, the clergy passes through ten stages of moral decline, each of which lasts a hundred years. The symptoms listed are familiar, as they occur in several apocrypha of this type. After a thousand years (i.e. 1,300 years after the *Parinirvāṇa*) a state of total degeneration has been reached: the clergy is ignorant, corrupt, and subjected to the wordly powers; the monks engage in forbidden practices such as carrying arms, slaughtering animals, and marriage. Great chaos and disasters will break out, culminating in a flood that will last twelve years. Then Prince Moonlight will appear in the world. As

[29] In these apocryphal texts, the personage of Yueguang has advanced yet another step towards the status of a true messiah. Unlike his performance in legitimistic masquerades serving the interests of Sui Wendi and Empress Wu (for whom a truly apocalyptic role obviously would not have been acceptable) we see him here associated, not only with the *mofa* situation, but also with real apocalyptic themes: the deluge; the destruction of sinners, and the separation of the blessed minority.

An elusive element in this complex consists of the recurring references to a tradition concerning the "almsbowl of the Buddha". We have seen how it was mentioned together with Yueguang in the earliest reference to that saviour, a letter of the year 365 CE, and how Sui Wendi in his role as manifestation of Yueguang tongzi is said to have paid homage to that sacred object after it had come to China from Kashgar. In the early Buddhist bibliographies, one of the three lost apocrypha that appear to have been devoted to the appearance of Yueguang and to the incarnation of Maitreya is a *Prophecy about the Buddha's Alms-bowl* 佛鉢記 (cf. above, note 37). The details of this tradition and the role played by Yueguang in it are unclear. However, the idea that this famous relic in the distant future would mystically disappear from India, and successively emerge at various places, making a kind of tour throughout India, Central Asia, and China (or, according to another version, moving from one heaven to another), finally to be received by Maitreya, is attested in several sources.

According to a well-known episode of the legend of Śākyamuni's life, the Buddha shortly after his Enlightenment received from the Four Heavenly Kings four stone almsbowls that had spontaneously been produced on Mt. Vinataka. The Buddha accepted them, and then miraculously joined them into a single bowl, which he used for the rest of his life. After his *Parinirvāṇa* it became one of the most venerable relics of the Buddhist
[30] world; in the fourth and early fifth century this object—or at least a huge stone alms-bowl that was claimed to be the original *buddha-pātra*—was kept in a temple at Puruṣapura in Gandhāra, where it was visited by several

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an ideal ruler, he will convert the people by preaching the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and many will be reborn in the heavens. Universal well-being will return; the human body will become eight feet tall, and men will live up to 180 years of age. Yueguang's reign will last fifty-one years. But then the final decay will resume its course. The monk Luoyun 羅云 will assemble all the holy relics, and the nāga-king "Parinirvāṇa" 般泥洹龍王 will receive these, as well as all the scriptures, and store them in his oceanic palace. On earth, no trace will be left of the great doctrine.

Chinese pilgrims.[52] However, by the time Xuanzang visited the sanctuary, the Bowl was no longer there. He reports that it had been taken away and broken by a wicked king of Kashmir (who elsewhere is identified with the notoriously anti-Buddhist King Mihirakula);[53] after the latter's conquest of Gandhāra, the relic had been moved elsewhere, and was now reported to be in "Persia" 波剌斯.[54] But relics have a natural tendency to multiply, and according to other statements the Bowl could also be seen in Kashmir, and even in Kashgar 沙勒國—the same Central Asian kingdom that is mentioned in the Sui interpolation as the place from where it was to reach China.[55]

[31] The prophecy concerning the future peregrinations of the *buddhapātra* appears to be based on an Indian tradition, as is proved by a curious passage in Faxian's account of his visit to Ceylon. There he listened to a prophecy recited by an Indian monk, to the effect that the Buddha's almsbowl originally was kept in Vaiśālī, and was now to be seen in Gandhāra. After "a number of centuries" it would move to the country of Yuezhi, and then, in successive stages, manifest itself in Khotan, Kucha, and China 漢地. From China it would return to Ceylon, and then move on to, respec-

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52 Cf. Faxian's record of his pilgrimage, T 2085 高僧法顯傳 p. 858b; pilgrimages made by Fayong 法勇 recorded in *CSZJJ* T 2145, j. 15, p. 113b and *GSZ*, T 2059, j. 3, p. 338c; and by Daopu 道普, in *GSZ*, T 2059, j. 2, p. 337a.

53 T 386 蓮華面經, trsl. Narendrayaśas, j. 2, p. 1075c.

54 T 2053 大慈恩寺三藏法師傳, j. 2, p. 230a; T 2087 大唐西域記, j. 2, p. 879c, and T 2087, j. 11, p. 938a.

55 Biography of Zhimeng 智猛 in T 2145 *CSZJJ*, j. 15, p. 113b, and T 2059 *GSZ*, j. 3, p. 343b; biography of Kumārajīva in T 2059 *GSZ*, j. 2, p. 330b.

Kashgar again is mentioned in an entry in the *Weishu* chapter on Buddhism and Daoism (*Weishu* j. 114, 釋老志, pp. 3036–3037) where it is stated that at the beginning of the Tai'an era (455–460) "foreign monk(s?) from Kashgar came to the capital (i.e. the first Tuoba Wei capital near Datong), and brought there the almsbowl of the Buddha, as well as painted icons" 沙勒胡沙門赴京師, 致佛鉢幷畫像迹. This may have been a replica of the relic, but the text does not expressly say so. That such replicas were made, and eventually also found their way to China, is attested by a passage from the biography of the early fifth century monk Sengbiao 僧表 that has been preserved in the *Meisōden-shō* 名僧傳抄 (an extract made in 1235 by the monk Shūshō 宗性 from a *Mingseng zhuan* manuscript in the Tōdaiji at Nara; the original *Mingseng zhuan* was a compilation of monks' biographies completed by Baochang 寶唱 in 519 CE). The Biography first mentions the curious fact that the Almsbowl, then kept at Kashmir, once had flown through the air, with a retinue of twelve Arhats, to Liangzhou 涼州 (in present-day Gansu) and there had stayed for six years before returning to Kashmir. It then goes on to describe Sengbiao's attempt to reach Kashmir, which failed because the roads were blocked. Sengbiao then stayed in Khotan (于賓 in the text is no doubt a mistake for 于闐), where the king presented him with a Buddha statue and a replica of the Buddha's Almsbowl. Afterwards Sengbiao returned to Shu (present-day Sichuan), where both objects "are now still kept by the Longhua Monastery 龍華寺 in Chengdu". (*Zoku-zōkyō* 續藏經 II, 2, VII. 1, p. 13^{b}).

tively, Central India, the Tuṣita heaven (to be venerated by Maitreya), and the *nāga*-king Sāgara who would keep it in his ocean-palace till the advent of Maitreya. After the latter's incarnation, the *pātra* will spontaneously return to Mt. Vinataka and split up into its original four parts. Each one of the Four Heavenly Kings will then again take one of these bowls to the Buddha Maitreya, who will repeat Śākyamuni's miracle and join them into one alms-bowl—for all the thousand Buddhas of our *kalpa* use one and the same bowl. Faxian was duly impressed and wanted a written copy of this "*sūtra*", but the preacher said: "For this (prediction) there is no canonical text; I am just making an oral recitation" 此無經本吾止口誦耳.[56]

In Narendrayaśas' sixth century translation of the *Lianhua mian jing* 蓮華面經 (T 386), the whole circuit of the Buddha's alms-bowl has been transposed to the heavens: after the removal of the *pātra* from Gandhāra to Kashmir, it will disappear from the earth, manifest itself to one class of gods after the other, and then pass into the hands of Sāgara who will keep it till the coming of Maitreya.[57] But China again figures in a prophecy of supposedly Indian origin, reported by Daoshi 道世 in his *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 of 668 CE: after the *Parinirvāṇa* the alms-bowl will move from one place to another; finally it will reach China and "cause the transforming influence left behind (by the Buddha) to flourish in the region of Han" 遺化興於漢境.[58]

[32] From all this we can only conclude that an Indian tradition concerning the future peregrinations of the Buddha's alms-bowl, in which China was mentioned as one of the places to the blessed by its appearance, had given rise to a Chinese version in which the "descent" of this auspicious object in China probably was emphasized. The story, in which both Maitreya and Yueguang appear to have played a role, was, *inter alia*, told in a lost

56 T 2085 高僧法顯傳, p. 863c.

57 T 386, j. 2, p. 1075c.

58 T 2122, j. 30, p. 513b. Daoshi adds that this information was based on an Indian text that had been brought from Northern India to the Shijian Monastery 石澗寺 "in the year *jiazi* 甲子", and that its content was made known by a certain *dhyāna*-master Saṅghayaśas 僧伽耶舍 when the latter was sent as an envoy to China. The text measured "about two sheets" 有兩紙許—an expression that apparently refers to the Chinese translation of the *Prophecy*, which then, depending on the number of columns per sheet and the number of characters per column, would have been a text of something between 650 and 1300 *zi*. The Shijian Monastery in Shouchun 壽春 (present-day Shouxian in Anhui) is to my knowledge only mentioned in a few passages in historical and bibliographical sources referring to the early fifth century (T 2059 高僧傳 j. 2, p. 333b; *ib*., j. 11, p. 399c; T 2145 出三藏記集 j. 3, p. 20b; T 2149 大唐内典錄 j. 3, p. 246c). If the Indian text arrived at the monastery at that time, the *jiazi* year would be 424 CE. About Saṅghayaśas and his mission to China I have found no further information.

apocryphal text that may not be earlier than the fifth century, but the theme itself was already known around the middle of the fourth. In Sui times a new element is introduced: the object is said to move from Kashgar to China, there to be venerated by the emperor who, according to this propagandistic tale, is a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Yueguang himself.

But even more baffling is the question that underlies the whole story of Yueguang’s career in China: why was this rather obscure Bodhisattva destined to play such an important soteriological role? We cannot answer it on the basis of clear evidence. Narendrayaśas’s translation of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* (T 639, second half of the sixth century), which contains the prophecy of Yueguang’s future Buddhahood, does say explicitly that he will become a Buddha in the period of the end of the Doctrine (末法時代), when the world is full of ignorance and sin,[59] and this may provide one possible clue, but this text is of course rather late and cannot have been the original source of inspiration.

It is possible that the very name of the Bodhisattva may have played a certain role in his transformation. There are some scriptural passages in which Yueguang speaks words that refer to “moon” or “moonlight”: in a series of Bodhisattvas each of whom gives his own definition of the Absolute (a familiar *cliché* of which many examples occur in Mahāyāna scriptures, the most famous one being the sequence of speakers in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*), he is the one who compares all phenomena with the
[33] moon’s reflection in water,[60] and in a hymn sung by him the Buddha is compared to the moon,[61] but the similes are quite commonplace, and can, at best, only have served to reinforce some pre-existing association between the theme of the saviour and some kind of moon-symbolism. As we shall see, the apocryphal Dunhuang text to be treated below contains some very obscure references to a (obviously evil) power or fluid called The Old Moon, *guyue* 古月, which prevails in the final period, and which is to be supplanted by the virtuous rule of Yueguang. At first sight, it seems obvious to regard the “Old Moon” as a veiled allusion to “the Barbarians”, as the two graphs combined form the character *hu* 胡. In fact, we find the term used in this way in a prognostic verse of ca. 360 CE, quoted in the

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[59] T 639 月燈三昧經, j. 3, pp. 567b–568a.
[60] T 397 大方等大集經, trsl. Dharmakṣema (ca. 420 CE), p. 132a.
[61] T 462 寶星陀羅尼經, trsl. Prabhāmitra (ca. 630 CE), p. 565c.

Annals of the ruler Fu Jian 苻堅 in *Jin shu* j. 114, p. 2910: 古月之末亂中國. . . .[62] The term also occurs—probably again referring to the barbarians—in the Daoist apocalyptic scripture TT 322 天地運度經 p. 4[b], where the Old Moon is said "to invade China" 古月侵神州 as an evil influence. However, in the messianic lore around Yueguang tongzi it appears to have a more general meaning. The saviour is by no means represented as a symbol of China versus the barbarians. As we have seen above (p. 24), in the interpolation in the *Shenri jing* he is even expressly said to convert the inhabitants in all border regions, and in the *Zhengming jing* the barbarians are explicitly stated to be destined to be saved as much as the Chinese are. We can only conclude that at a certain stage Prince Moonlight became part of a pre-existing indigenous complex of ideas in which the "Old Moon" played a certain role, and in which the Bodhisattva's name acquired a special significance which it originally did not have at all. However, I have so far failed to find any further information about the origin and nature of such a belief.

V. *The Buddho-Daoist Apocalypse: Two Texts from Dunhuang*

Fortunately, our information is not restricted to the isolated and fragmentary data which we have treated so far. The Buddho-Daoist eschatology in its fully developed form is set forth in two apocryphal *sūtras* that have been preserved in a number of Dunhuang manuscripts. The first text, that [34] is almost exclusively devoted to the messianic activities of the Bodhisattva Yueguang tongzi, is entitled "The Scripture of the monk Shouluo" *Shouluo biqiu jing* 首羅比丘經; it is no doubt identical with the "Scripture of the monk Shouluo meeting Yueguang tongzi, *Shouluo biqiu jian Yueguang tongzi jing* 首羅比丘見月光童子經 that is mentioned in the section "faked *sūtras*" in Buddhist bibliographies since the early Sui, and probably dates from the sixth century.[63] For brevity's sake, we shall refer to it as the *Shouluo jing.*

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[62] I owe this reference to Anna Seidel. Cf. also M. C. Rogers, *Chin-shu: The Chronicle of Fu Chien*, Berkeley, 1968, p. 261, n. 522.

[63] First mentioned in T 2146 衆經目錄 (594 CE), j. 2, p. 126c, there immediately followed by a no doubt closely related *Prophecy concerning the vision of the Bodhisattva Yueguang* 觀月光菩薩記; also mentioned in the later Sui and Tang catalogues: T 2147 j. 4, p. 173b; T 2149 j. 10, p. 334c; T 2153 j. 15, p. 473a; T 2154 j. 4, p. 173b; T 2157 j. 28, p. 1020a. I have made use of five manuscript versions from the London and Peking collections: (1) Peking ms. 292:8274 (重 26 according to the old numbering system based on the *Qianziwen*) which is nearly complete (about twenty characters lacking in the upper half of the first two columns, and

The text is only partly intelligible. At first sight this would seem to be due to extreme textual corruption, but a comparison of the five manuscript versions that are at my disposal leads to the conclusion that this is not the case: the manuscripts are carefully written by skilled copyists, and, apart from a few rather insignificant variant readings, the text is very uniform and appears to have been transmitted with great accuracy. If some parts of the scripture, particularly in its final sections, are so cryptic as to defy all attempts to understand it (let alone to translate it), this must be due to the intentional use of a kind of oracular language, teeming with veiled allusions, symbolic images, and plays on words—which, after all, it is not surprising to find in a sectarian prophetic scripture. In spite of its partial unintelligibility, it is a unique document that enables us to reconstruct the main features of a Buddho-Daoist eschatology of the late Nanbei-chao period.

A number of cryptic passages can be made somewhat clearer by comparing them with our second text, the "Scripture of the Realization of
[35] Understanding preached by the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra" *Puxian pusa shuo zhengming jing* 普賢菩薩說證明經, another sixth century apocryphal work, that is known by that title in Buddhist bibliographies since 594 CE, and, like the *Shouluo Scripture*, has only been preserved in a number of Dunhuang manuscripts.[64] Following the example of Antonino Forte,

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some minor lacunae further down); (2) Peking 292:8275 (old number 日 87) in which the first eighteen columns of (1) are lacking); (3) S 2697, reproduced in vol. 85 of the *Taishō Canon*, T 2873 lacking the first 68 columns of (1); (4) S 6881, lacking the first 25 columns of (1); (5) S 1811, lacking the first 46 columns of (1). The text can be tentatively dated between 518 (the year in which Sengyou completed his *CSZJJ*, in which the scripture is not mentioned) and 589 CE, when it figures for the first time in a Buddhist bibliography.

[64] A critical edition based on three Dunhuang manuscripts of this text has been included in vol 85 of the *Taishō Canon*, T 2879, pp. 1362c–1368b. To the six manuscripts mentioned by Forte may be added four more from the Peking collection, *viz.* 2098:8290–8293 (陽 21; 談 85, 鹹 77, and 光 97 according to the old numbering system). The eschatological part of the scripture only covers the last sections of this composite text, from p. 1365c onward. The scripture figures in all the important Buddhist bibliographies since Fajing's catalogue of 589 CE, sometimes with a slightly different title (普賢菩薩說此證明經 with a puzzling 此 "this" inserted before *zheng*): T 2146, j. 2, p. 126c; T 2147 j. 4, p. 173b; T 2154 j. 18, p. 675b; T 2157 j. 28, p. 1020a; title without 此 in T 2149 j. 10, p. 334c, and T 2153 j. 15, p. 472c. I agree with Forte that this text (like the *Shouluo jing*) probably dates from somewhere between 518 and 589 CE, but in this case we can perhaps be more precise, for terminological reasons. The text repeatedly refers to the continent of Jambudvīpa by the transcription 閻浮履 (also noted by Forte, op. cit., p. 276, note 22), which is quite unusual, the last syllable of the Chinese form usually being 提, 利, 梨, or 里. To my knowledge, it only occurs in the vocabulary of the translator Jñānagupta (e.g. T 3448, p. 861a), who was active in China between 560 and 600. If we accept this criterium, it follows that the *Zhengming jing* was written somewhere between 560 and 589. The text moreover speaks about "the five (kinds

who has studied this scripture and summarized its content in his excellent work on the ideological use of Buddhism under Empress Wu,[65] we shall refer to it as the *Zhengming jing*. It is a composite work, the last part of which contains an appalling description of the cosmic disasters, the apocalyptic battle, Maitreya's descent, the separation and salvation of the true believers, and the recreation of the world into an ideal form. Yueguang is mentioned in this text too, but the main personage is Maitreya. The description of the end of the world is also full of cryptic terms and allusions, but as a whole it is more coherent and understandable than the last part of the *Shouluo jing*, and it contains certain themes, such as the reconstruction of the world, that are lacking, or only briefly alluded to, in our first text.

[36] The *Shouluo jing* consists of at least three episodes. The first one is situated in the legendary "Land of Gentlemen", Junzi guo 君子國 (an island in the eastern ocean peopled with long-lived saintly beings, known in Chinese tradition since the *Shanhai jing*).[66] The opening scene describes the encounter between a certain "*bhikṣu* Shouluo" (Śūra?),[67] who is dwelling in the Taining monastery 太寧寺 (apparently near the royal capital of the Land of Gentlemen), and the leader of a group of five hundred Immortals 仙 who arrive there. They are on their way to the abode of Yueguang, but at Shouluo's invitation they consent to stay for a while in the monastery. The encounter is followed by a long dialogue between Shouluo and the "Great Immortal" 大仙 about the iminent disasters and the ways to escape from them; the appearance of Yueguang, who is also referred to as the "King (or 'Lord') of Light", *mingwang* 明王 or *mingjun* 明君[68] and as the

of) barbarians who break and destroy the Doctrine" (p. 1365c), which very probably refers to the violent repression of Buddhism under the Northern Zhou in 574–577 CE. In that case, Fajing, writing in 589, was dealing with a very recent apocryphal production.

65 Antonino Forte, op. cit., pp. 271–280.

66 *Shanhai jing* 山海經, ed. He Yixing 郝懿行 j. 9.1b: a country lying in the far northeast, peopled with civilized people who are served by tigers and never fight each other. It is also mentioned in *Huainan zi*, ed 諸子集成, j. 4, p. 59.

67 This personage is not quite unknown in the Buddhist tradition, for a monk of that name (with the addition of -*bhikṣu* 北丘, which is very unusual in Buddhist translations) occurs in Kumārajīva's early fifth century translation of the (?) *Pūrṇa-paripṛcchā* 富羅那問經 (incorporated by Bodhiruci in his version of the *Mahāratnakūṭa*, T 310 大寶積經, j. 78, p. 448a) as the receiver of a *vyākaraṇa* pronounced by the Buddha. However, his activities described there are not related to his role in the *Shouluo biqiu jing*.

68 In the *Zhengming jing* this "King of Light" occurs several times as an independent saving power, clearly different from the "Saintly Ruler" 聖主 who will also appear to rule the world (e.g. T 2879, p. 1366a26: 天出明王, 地出聖主, 二聖並治并在神州 (cf. Forte, op. cit., p. 280), and 1366a29: 明王聖主俱在化城...). His relation to Maitreya, the principal saviour in the

"Lord of Peace", *pingjun* 平君, and the number and qualities of the various
[37] categories of people that are to be saved. The Great Immortal alsoreveals the names of a number of sages (*xian* 賢) who are already living in our world, but who cannot be recognized by the profane, as they all carefully hide their special qualities.

In the second part, the king of the Country of Gentlemen arrives with an immense following of ministers and courtiers, and when the Great Immortal has told the king about the aim of his journey, the king decides to join them, as does Shouluo. The whole company then makes the arduous journey to the island Penglai 蓬萊, well-known from Daoist tradition, where Yueguang resides in a subterranean cave together with three thousand Saints. After welcoming his guests, he at first shows no inclination to answer their question—he will appear soon, for the times are fulfilled; let them just wait and see. But after the king has explained that he does not know what to do when the catastrophe breaks out, Yueguang tells him about the way in which the apocalytic happenings will take place, and the methods to be followed in order to be saved.

In the third part the company returns to the Country of Gentlemen. The king devotes himself to the propagation of the message that he has heard from the future saviour, in order to effect as many last-minute conversions as possible, and so to increase the number of saved souls among his subjects. This part also contains concrete indications on how to practice a certain mental technique, combined with the recitation of a spell and with ritual purification, that enables one to "visualize" the saviour, here called The Lord of Light, with all his attributes. The spell is a *dhāraṇī* in pseudo-Sanskrit.[69]

After this section, the text becomes ever more cryptic and chaotic. There is a list of miraculous signs that will appear, and a number of oracular statements, some of which seem to refer to certain poses or movements of hands and fingers by which the *electi* are to be recognized. The last lines

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Zhengming jing, is not clear. Or does the "Lord of Light" simply refer to Maitreya himself? The simultaneous appearance of two saving powers as described in the *Zhengming jing* finds its counterpart in the "Tao-Buddhist" messianic text studied by Anna Seidel (cf. note 15) where the Perfect Lord 眞君 is said to descend together with Maitreya. In the *Shouluo jing*, Yueguang tongzi and the "King (or Lord) of Light" appear to be the same person. He is twice referred to as 月光明王 (T 2873, p. 1357b2, 7), and the identity of the two is clearly shown on p. 1357c24–25, where the king "says to the King of Light…" 大王白明王言…, and the answer to his question is given by "Yueguang".

[69] For the frequent use of this kind of pseudo-Sanskrit gibberish in Daoist texts see my article mentioned in note 1, pp. 107–112.

refer, in equally sibylline terms, to the salutary activities performed by the Bodhisattva Vimalakīrti (Weimo 維摩) in this world, whilst pretending to lead a life of voluptuousness—a faint and distorted image of the famous house-holder of Vaiśālī, whose pious opportunism forms the subject of one of the most famous Mahāyāna *sūtras.*

After this very global survey of the contents of the *Shouluo jing* (a more
[38] extensive summary of which is given in the Appendix), we shall once more revert to the basic eschatological and messianistic themes mentioned in the first part of this article, and see how they appear in their fully developed form in these two Buddho-Daoist texts.

(1) *The crisis* is clearly one of cosmic dimensions. According to the *Shouluo jing*, the three scourges of deluge, epidemics, and evil powers (*yaoxie* 妖邪) ravage the world. The water will stand forty *li* high upon the flat land; it will come rolling on from the northwest to the southeast, with raging billows and a thundering noise. Then epidemics will come and exterminate most of the surviving sinners under terrible sufferings. The third scourge, that of the evil powers, is brought over the earth by the demons. When the hour of Yueguang is approaching, thirty-six monstrous Māra-kings appear with their hosts; like true apocalyptic riders they are mounted on dragon-horses; they are brandishing their diamond clubs and shout "*sha*!" 殺. Then there will be a deep darkness lasting seven days and nights. In the dark, heaven and earth are shaken by heavy earthquakes, whilst the demons persecute the surviving sinners. In the *Zhengming jing*, the picture is even more terrifying. After the seven days and nights of darkness and cosmic convulsions, a demon-king will appear, wearing a black garment with red cords, and armed with a red club, at the head of a huge horde of demons who destroy the sinners. Then the cosmic conflagration takes place: the whole world is burnt down by an Asura-king holding seven suns in his hands. Even the mountains melt and disappear; the earth has become a scorched plain. At that moment, Maitreya descends, seated in a splendid shrine that floats down from the Tuṣita heaven. As in the Daoist tradition, there is a quasi-exact fixation of the apocalyptic happenings in time and space. The judgement will take place in the (two
[39] successive) years *shen* 申 and *you* 酉;[70] the saviour will appear "north of

[70] T 2873, p. 1358a9, and p. 1358b4. At first sight, it would be tempting to regard 申酉as a corruption of 甲酉, but all manuscripts read *shen*, and moreover, the same succession of years is mentioned in connection with the appearance of the Daoist saviour Li Hong in TT 322 天地運度經 p. 4[b]. On p. 6[a], the same text specifies that the *shen* year here refers to

the Yellow River, and south of the Weak Water" 黃河以北, 弱水以南,[71] and he will be king in the territory of Han" 王於漢境.

(2) *The battle* is total and titanic. In the *Shouluo jing* the demons who ravage mankind appear to come of their own accord, but in the *Zhengming jing* it is, of all persons, the kindly Bodhisattva Samantabhadra who unleashes these monsters upon the sinners and orders the Asura-king to burn the earth. However, quite in accordance with the Daoist pattern, there is also a huge war going on between the supernatural forces of good and evil. The thirty-six Māra-kings and their armies that figure in the *Shouluo jing* will be defeated by a great Trāyastriṃśa god named He tian 赫天; he rides a dragon-horse and wields divine arms. But the *Zhengming jing* describes an even more grandiose field of battle: when Maitreya descends, the demon-kings with their armies will try to resist him, and they are defeated by a host of myriads of Bodhisattvas, riding on supernatural elephants and lions, and armed to the teeth.

(3) *The judgement* is a complete separation between the pious believers and the sinners. Interestingly, the line of separation runs through all worldly groups, so that even the closest relatives may find themselves in opposite camps. At that time, the *Shouluo jing* says in almost biblical terms, "the father will not know his son, nor will the mother know her daughter".[72] The crowds of sinners and of the pious ones seem to be herded into two separate groups, at least according to a rather cryptic passage in the *Zhengming jing*, which says that when Maitreya descends he will collect those who are destined to be saved "east of the bridge", and the sinners "west of the bridge".[73] The chosen people constitute a
[40] small minority; for only 84,000 or 87,000 persons will be saved.[74] Their

the *jiashen* year: 甲申之歲是天地運度. In our second text (T 2879, p. 1366a) the deluge is said to take place 799 years after the *Parinirvāṇa*, a very unusual system of dating, which does not resemble other systems (for which see above, note 35) that make use of multiples of 500, or at least of round igures.

[71] Ever since the Yugong chapter of the Book of Documents, Chinese semi-mythical geography mentions a river called Ruoshui 弱水, located in the far west or northwest (ranging from the Roman Orient to present-day northern Kansu). The expression quoted here probably means no more than "in northern China".

[72] T 2873, p. 1358b5: 公不識兒母不識女.

[73] T 2879, p. 1366b5–8: 有緣在橋東無緣在橋西. The river that here functions as the dividing-line appears to be the "Weak Water" 弱水 mentioned in l. 5 (cf. note 71).

[74] In T 2878, p. 1366c10–12, the number of persons carried by the *garuḍa* that is sent to rescue them is said to be 87,000, but in an earlier passage (p. 1365c14) the number of 84,000 saved ones is mentioned. The text further explicitly states that this number includes both Chinese and barbarians; if I understand the text correctly, it even implies

salvation is the fruit of their religious piety, which appears to be of the most elementary kind: the confession of the Triple Refuge (*sangui* 三歸); the Five Rules (*wujie* 五戒) to be observed by laymen; fasting, the practice of "visualization", and reciting the *Guanshiyin Scripture* (*Guanshiyin jing* 觀世音經).[75]

In addition to these formal precepts and techniques, the practicants are constantly told to devote themselves whole-heartedly to religious works, to repent, and to abstain from desire and evil intentions. They are ordered to "change their hearts and change their thoughts" 改心改意; to "change their former ways and cultivate themselves for the future" 改往脩來; for soon a Lord of Darkness (*anjun* 闇君, apparently the mirror-image of the Lord of Light) will come, and only those who exert themselves to the utmost can be saved. Although Shouluo, who receives the message of Yueguang's advent in the first part of the scripture, is a monk, and salvation is promised to members of the Five Communities of religious life (including monk and nuns) provided that they change their past and repent, the kind of religious exercises described in these passages definitely suggest that the *electi* are lay Buddhists rather than members of the *saṅgha*. In the second part of the *sūtra*, the monk Shouluo has disappeared; the propagation of Yueguang's message is carried out by the king, and there is no indication that the clergy plays any positive role in the work of salvation. The lay character of this millenarian faith is confirmed by a passage in the *Shouluo jing* in which the clergy is described as steeped in sin (notably because of its commercial activities), so that
[41] only one out of every thousand monks will be saved,[76] and by a curious

a kind of numerical distribution: 80,000 Chinese—i.e. 10,000 for each of the categories of people mentioned—and 4,000 barbarians. The idea that the latter can possess the sacred scriptures and therefore be saved is also found in the Daoist tradition, cf. TT 335 神呪經 j. 5, p. 5^{b}. As we have seen, the tendency to specify the number of *electi* who will be saved from the cataclysm is a general feature of Daoist eschatology. It reaches its climax in the messianic text studied and translated by Anna Seidel (cf. note 15) which not only indicates the size of the groups, but also their geographical distribution: 800 in the region of Sanyang 三陽; 1,300 in the Wei metropolitan area, etc.

[75] It is not clear which one of the many scriptures devoted to Guan(shi)yin is meant here. The most influential scripture of Guanyin devotion was the chapter devoted to this Bodhisattva in the *Lotus Sūtra* (section 24 in Kumārajīva's version, T 262, pp. 56c–58b 觀世音菩薩普門品, = *Samanta-mukha-parivarta*). However, several apocryphal texts devoted to *Guan*(*shi*)*yin* had been produced in the Nanbei-chao period, cf. Makita Tairyō. op. cit., p. 67.

[76] T 2874, p. 1358b10–15. The reading of S 2109, reproduced in the *Taishō Canon* as T 2874, is corrupt: 千介拔十介. All other manuscript copies have 千个拔一个.

statement in the *Zhengming jing* where the monks only come last in a series of eight categories of people to be saved, the first seven being (1) old men; (2) old women; (3) pious women; (4) pious men; (5) the poor; (6) low-class people 下賤; and (7) the young and feeble 小弱.

As in the Daoist tradition, the *electi* are represented as being physically rescued and brought to a safe place. The *Shouluo jing* is amazingly specific: when in the *shen* and *you* years the great disasters break out, it will be safe in the area of Yangzhou 陽州.[77] The blood will flow in streams, and the white bones will lie piled up like mountains; only in the southeast it will be possible to obtain deliverance. The text also mentions several mountains on which one can escape from the deluge; most of these cannot be identified, but the one mountain that is also known from secular sources, the Fuzhou shan 覆舟山, is indeed situated in the Lower Yangtze region, near present-day Nanking. The rescue operation is described in very concrete termes. The *Shouluo jing* tells us that the pious ones will
[42] be saved from the deluge by a nāga king 龍王 who will transport them to a floating island;[78] whereas according to the *Zhengming jing* they will be taken up by a gigantic garuḍa 金翅鳥 who lifts them to the Tuṣita heaven.[79] But in both texts, the final destination of the blessed is described as a

[77] T 2874, p. 1356c5–7, the name of this well-known city is here followed by a series of six other names that appear to be mythical. One of these is, interestingly, Liucheng 柳城, the "Willow City", which is known to play an important role in later secret society lore as the spiritual centre of the brotherhood. This may be coincidental, but the impression that some of such secret lore may be traced back to very early Buddhist sectarianism is reinforced by the reference to hand or finger gestures in the *Shouluo jing* (cf. below). The idea that Yangzhou is a place of salvation is also found in a sixth century Daoist scripture, TT 322, p. 5^{a}: 揚州可度世. All manuscripts of the *Shouluo jing* write Yang 陽 zhou, which as such is only known as a locality in the state of Qi in the Spring and Autumn period. Since, however, the Daoist parallel mentioned above writes Yang 揚 zhou, I assume that it does refer to the famous city on the lower Yangzi which, incidentally, had also been a centre of "subversive" Buddhist sectarian activities around the beginning of the sixth century. It was here (at Xiadu 下都, i.e. Yangzhou) that the religious leader Miaoguang 妙光 together with three of his relatives started the very curious movement described by Sengyou, who himself played a role in its repression (T 2145, j. 5, p. 40b–c). Liucheng is also mentioned in an analogous context in the prophetic verses of the same Daoist apocalyptic scripture, TT 322 太上靈寶天地運度自然妙經, p. 4^{b}: after the outbreak of a great flood that will start from Northern China (燕趙成洪流), the Willow City will be a place of survival (柳城卽生地).

[78] T 2873, p. 1357b24. The "dragon" is here of course mixed up with the *nāga* of Buddhist mythology. But the idea that the faithful will be saved from the deluge by (real, Chinese) dragons is also found in the Daoist *Shenzhou jing*, cf. TT 335 j. l, p. 7^{b}. However, another passage of the same scripture (j. 5, p. 7^{a}) indicates that those dragons actually draw a huge wagon, 84,000 *li* square, which is able to hold 490,000 people.

[79] T 2879, p. 1366c: it is twenty *li* long; it can carry 7,000 people in its mouth, and 80,000 on its back.

magic city 化城[80] of great splendour, situated either in the Tuṣita heaven or on an island in the ocean. It is represented as the celestial counterpart of the ideal Chinese metropolis: a huge, geometrically arranged complex of concentrically arranged city-walls, the inner wall enclosing the "Tuṣita City" 兜率城 where the King of the Doctrine 法王 is residing.

(4) *The assistants"* of the saviour are mentioned in the *Shouluo jing*, and again we are amazed by its specificity, for it lists the names of nineteen "Sages" 賢 who are now already living in this sinful world.[81] They are the
[43] spiritual Leaders 導師 who are able to control life and death 能運生死. But they are invisible to the eye of the flesh 肉眼, for they are living in disguise, pretending to be common people, or even fools and sinners. When the time comes, they will make themselves known.

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[80] T 2873, p. 1356a–b; T 2879, p. 1366a. In some manuscripts *huacheng* is written 花城, "Flower City", but this is probably a mistake (the confusion between 化 and 花 often occurs in Dunhuang manuscripts, e.g. T 2007, p. 345a8–9). In Antonino Forte's view (op. cit., pp. 162–163) the ideal of the Magic City is derived from the seventh section of the *Lotus Scripture* (trsl. Kumārajīva, T 262 j. 3, pp. 25c–26a), named "The Parable of the Magic City" 化城喻. As far as the name of this divine city is concerned, this is no doubt true. However, the image of the Magic City as described in our two apocryphal texts has nothing in common with the parable of the *Lotus Scripture.* Judging from the description of the city and the fact that its central part is called Tuṣita—the name of the heaven were Maitreya is dwelling—it is more probably that the account of the Huacheng is inspired by one of the exuberant descriptions of Maitreya's residence, like the one we find in T 442 觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經, pp. 418b–419a.

[81] T 2873, p. 1356c20–22 and 26–28. These two lists of what appear to be quite normal names are most puzzling. The first list consists of eight names which can be interpreted either as two-syllable names with the title *xian* 賢 "Sage" inserted between the *xing* and the *ming* (hence "the Sage Shi De 石賢德, the Sage Yan Ming 嚴賢明" . . ., or as monosyllabic surnames followed by two-syllable *ming*, each *ming* having *xian* as its first element. The second list enumerates eleven names, each of which consists of a monosyllabic *xing* and a bisyllabic *ming.* Further on, the text mentions three larger groups of helpers (p. 1357a), consisting of sixteen "Equanimous Ones" 平等, seventy-two "True Gentlemen" 正士 and three thousand Sages 賢, and states that these cannot be seen by normal people as long as "the Old Moon is flourishing" 古月興盛. This curious theme, that has been mentioned above in connection with Yuenguang's name (cf. p. 214f.), occurs several times in the *Shouluo jing.* It clearly denotes some kind of evil power or "fluid" that dominates in the final era, and that will cease to exist, or at least to be active, on the advent of Yueguang, the (new) "Moonlight". As we have seen, the term also occurs in the Daoist scripture TT 322 天地運度經. It is to be noted that this Daoist text also is the one that mentions the Willow city and Yangzhou as places of deliverance (cf. note 75 above). A possible relation between the Daoist eschatology as represented by that particular Lingbao scripture and our *Shouluo jing* seems probable, and deserves further study. The idea of "hidden Sages" who cannot be recognized by the profane, but will show their true identity to the pious believers has a close parallel in TT 442 上清後聖道君列紀 pp. 7^b–8^a (twenty-four Perfected Ones mentioned by name), and TT 335 神呪經 j. 3, p. 8^b (list of names of those who will realize Immortality in the year *jiashen*).

(5) *A New Heaven and a New Earth.* The reconstruction of the world is described in the *Zhengming jing* in some detail. After the conflagration, a mild and aromatic breeze starts to blow from the west; during seven days and nights it cools and purifies the smouldering embers of the old world. Then the earth is reconstructed in successive layers of precious and magical substances—a theme of Buddhist origin, that has been taken over, with many variations, by Daoist cosmography. There are seven layers, that from bottom to top are made of bronze, mercury, rock-crystal, beryl, silver, (?)saffron 鬱金, and gold. The mountains (an interesting Daoist contribution, for the ideal Buddhist world always is completely flat) consist of silver and gold, and the trees are made of silver. This reborn country of Jambudvīpa is full of palaces, pavillions and many-storied buildings, and even the city-wards are adorned with luminous jewels, so that there is no more difference between day and night.[82] Under the transforming rule (治化) of Maitreya, all evil powers will have disappeared, for even the demons will have been reborn as human beings. Man's life-span will
[44] be 87,000 years, after which they will be reborn in the even more blissful world of Amitābha, or be transported by Samantabhadra himself to Akṣobhya's eastern paradise.[83]

The complex of beliefs that we find in these curious documents forms the final product of a long and complicated process of borrowing, adaptation, and integration, resulting in an eschatological tradition that is so much an amalgam of Buddhist and Daoist elements, that it cannot be said exclusively to belong to either one or the other of the two main streams of Chinese religion. However, the general structure and some of the major themes—notably the Judgement and the apocalyptic battle—clearly are of Daoist origin.

The present study is only a first attempt to unravel the secrets of a nearly lost tradition, and many questions are still unanswered. Our source material is only partly intelligible, due to its oracular and esoteric nature; it is, however, to be expected that further comparative study of Buddhist apocrypha and early medieval Daoist texts will solve a number of problems. But even then another major question will remain unanswered, for there is little hope that we shall be able to provide these beliefs with a concrete historical background, as has been done with the well-known

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[82] T 2879, pp. 1366c–1367a.
[83] Ib., p. 1368a–b.

schools of Chinese Buddhism. We are obviously dealing with a very unorthodox, and potentially "subversive", kind of millenarian faith, that was probably limited to small groups of fanatic adventists who by fasting, repentance and prayer prepared themselves for the coming of the Lord. Geographical evidence supplied by the *Shouluo jing* itself indicates the Lower Yangzi region as its place of origin. But in the late sixth century the metropolitan Buddhist bibliographers included it in their lists of "faked scriptures", which may indicate that by that time it was already circulating in the Guanzhong region, and the many finely executed Dunhuang versions prove that the belief in Yueguang's advent was popular even in the far northwest in Tang time. Its popularity is also indirectly proved by the political use made of his name in support of Sui Wendi and Empress Wu (cf. above, p. 26), for even if this kind of imperial propaganda has nothing to do with the eschatological message of the *Shouluo jing*, it hardly would have been effective if the personage of Yueguang had not had a certain appeal among the public. It is clear that we stand here at the beginning of a special type of sectarian Buddhism that even shows some
[45] affinities with a secret society—the use of an enigmatic terminology only to be understood by an inner circle of initiates;[84] the puzzling reference to the "Willow City" (cf. note 75) and the use of a "finger-language" that so curiously reminds one of Chinese secret society lore of modern times. But this Yueguang sectarianism appears never to have developed political ambitions of its own; unlike Maitreya, Prince Moonlight never was able to inspire rebellious movements and so to attract the attention of secular historiographers.

But the cult of saintly figures may take many forms in popular imagination. We have seen that in early medieval China Maitreya was split into two completely different personages: a benign teacher in a world of the distant future, and an apocalyptic hero—and how far are both again removed from the pot-bellied "laughing Buddha" into which he was transformed in later popular Buddhism! It appears that the basic idea—attested since the fourth century—that Yueguang tongzi was somehow to appear in China also has led to a more modest conception of this Bodhisattva and his beneficial powers, without any apocalyptic associations. Apart from the incident reported in *Gaoseng zhuan* where he is represented as miraculously

[84] Cf. the significant phrase that in T 2873 (p. 1368c4) follows a series of oracular sayings: "If among my disciples there are (some) who understand (these) sayings of mine, then those are (truly) my disciples" 若有吾弟子，解吾口語，卽我弟子.

curing a devotee's disease (as any other Bodhisattva might do), historical literature contains one very curious passage in which Yueguang tongzi figures as the object of a popular cult. According to the *Treatise on Punishments* of the *Wei shu*, in the period 516/517 CE action was taken against superstitious practices that in Yanling 延陵 (in present-day southern Hebei) had grown around an eight year old boy, who was made to pose as an incarnation of Yueguang tongzi. The boy, whose normal name was Liu Jinghui 劉景暉, was surrounded by a circle of devotees, "(the monk?) Faquan 法權 and others", who called him "the Yueguang youth (*tongzi*) Liu Jinghui", and "with impish talk deluded the masses" 妖言惑衆. We know that this was considered a major crime warranting the death penalty—after all, only a few years before, it was on the same charge that the religious impostor Miaoguang (cf. note 77), who had made his family pose
[46] as a group of Indian saints, had been sentenced to death—a verdict that finally was changed into perpetual imprisonment by a special act of imperial grace.

In Yueguang's case, there indeed were some mitigating circumstances. When the matter was discussed at court, it was taken into account that the boy was a victim rather than a criminal. The Director of Justice Cui Zuan 崔纂 pleaded that he was a mere child, "his mouth still having the smell of milk". Though he was said to have the power to transform himself into a snake or a pheasant, he himself had never claimed to have such powers, nor had he himself ever said to be Yueguang—those were all fantastic stories spread by unscrupulous elements. As he was not responsible for what was said and done in his entourage, the Empress-dowager Ling was advised to spare his life, and to let him profit from an amnesty the terms of which had just expired, but that still was in vigour at the time when the "crime" was discovered. The poor child finally was banished to the desert commandery of Lueyang 略陽 in the far northwest.[85]

It is clear that, apart from the name, this pitiful story has nothing to remind us of the apocalyptic Prince Moonlight of the *Shouluo jing*. The text does not mention any messianic expectations connected with the boy

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[85] *Weishu*, j. 111 (刑罰志), ed. Zhonghua shuju, Peking, 1974, pp. 3884–3885; cf. also Tsukamoto Zenryū, op. cit., pp. 282–284. We cannot agree with Tsukamoto's thesis that such Buddhist sectarian movements under the Tuoba Wei were expressions of Chinese proto-nationalist resistance against the foreign ruling class. On the contrary: time and again we see, both in the "barbarian" northern empires and in the "Chinese" south, how it was not Buddhism but Daoism that served as a symbol of Chinese cultural identity, as opposed to Buddhism that never was able to free itself from the stigma of its foreign origin.

Liu Jinghui, and it may well be that he was regarded as an incarnation of Yueguang tongzi because of his youth (*tongzi*). It is true that strange and auspicious animals play an important role in both Daoist and Buddho-Daoist eschatology, but here the boy's pretended power to change himself into such creatures is just a case of magic "transformation", which probably is the most basic and common theme in Chinese popular religious lore of all ages. The incident shows that Yueguang tongzi in the fifth century had become associated with a great variety of religious beliefs, but it unfortunately does nothing to bridge the gap between our scriptural data on Yueguang messianism and its historical setting.

However, even if a historical frame-work is still lacking, the remark-
[47] able career of this minor Bodhisattva may have been worth saving from oblivion, as a clear illustration of the "Daoist counter-current" that was active within Chinese Buddhism. But perhaps we must altogether abandon the idea of two separate religious traditions "influencing" each other. What we call "Chinese Buddhism" and "Daoism" are, after all, abstractions, created by the fact that they only show themselves to us at the top level, that of the clerical establishments who created and maintained the two great traditions. At that level, the two systems are quite distinct. But once we go deeper down,[86] it appears that they partially overlap, and in certain areas completely merge together. If seen in this light, the *Shouluo jing* is a valuable specimen of such a Buddho-Daoist merger, brought up from a deep layer of total fusion that is normally hidden from our eyes.

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[86] "Deeper down" is perhaps somewhat misleading. What I intend to say is rather "removed from the centre of authority, both ecclesiastical (the clerical élite) and secular (the socio-political ideology of the scholar-official class)". In other words: we are dealing with beliefs and movements that (1) primarily belong to the sphere of *lay* religion, and (2) are operating on a *local* scale. This of course does not imply that such movements exclusively recruited their members from the lower strata of society. I may again quote Anna Seidel (cf. note 15), whose remarks about Buddho-Daoist fusion observable in sixth-century Daoist statuary may be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to our subject as a whole: "Il ne s'agit pas, à proprement parler, d'une religion d'illettrés de basse classe car les donateurs de ces statues étaient certainement des familles munies de biens et de prestige, mais plutôt d'une religion laïque et peut-être provinciale".

Appendix
Summary of the Shouluo Biqiu Jing 首羅比丘經

The summary is based on the most complete manuscript, *viz.* (*a*) = Peking no. 292:8274 reproduced at the end of this summary. It is the only one in which the opening lines partially have been preserved (cf. note 63 above). This version has been collated with the other four mss. mentioned in note 61; they are here referred to as follows: (*b*) = Peking 292:8275; (*c*) = S 2697 (reproduced in the *Taishō Canon* as T 2873; (*d*) = S 6881; (*e*) = S 1811. Numbers preceded with "l." indicate the columns in (*a*); from l. 69 onward, references to T 2873 have also been included.

[l. 1] In the Taining Monastery 太寧寺 (situated in the mountains of the same name), in the Country of Gentlemen 君子國, there is a *bhikṣu* called Shouluo 首羅. After having arisen at day-break, he sees that a group of
[48] five hundred Immortals 仙人, led by a Great Immortal 大仙, approaches the monastery. He pays homage to them, and politely invites them to stay at the monastery, which they agree to do [l. 5]. When asked by Shouluo why they are so excited, the Great Immortal explains that they have heard that Yueguang is soon to appear, and that he will be king in the territory of Han 王在漢境; [l. 10] his realm will be situated south of the Weak Water and north of the Long River 弱水以南, 長河以北. Shouluo: [l. 15] "When the Lord of Peace 平君 appears, will people be able to see him?" Great Immortal: "All those who have changed their past conduct and cultivate themselves for the future 改往脩來, all those who observe the commandments, will be able to see him"; he explains that these commandments refer to severe fasting 癘齋戒, whole-hearted mental concentration on the Buddha and the Doctrine 一心念佛念法, and the recital of religious texts 口誦法言. Even those members of the Five Communities (of religious life: monks; nuns; male and female novices; lay believers) who have committed the gravest sins 五逆重者 will be able to meet the Lord of Light 明君, [l. 20] provided that they change their past and repent.

Shouluo then proclaims to all beings: "Yueguang will soon appear; there will be terrible disasters. The world will be ravaged by floods, epidemics, famine, and 'heroes rising up in competition' 英雄競起 so that the people will know no rest. But I declare that [l. 25] it is possible to escape from those evils. Monks and nuns can be saved if they practice meditation, subdue their senses, recite the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and combat their own

arrogance; [l. 30–35] lay believers can be saved through strict observance of their vows, charitable works, and fasting".

Shouluo then asks about the circumstances under which the Lord of Light will appear and the number of years that he will need to realize the transforming power of peaceful government 太平治化. The Great Immortal answers that his territory will extend over the thirty-six countries. [l. 40] In the course of fifty-two years[87] he will splendidly revive the old and worn-out doctrine of Śākyamuni 釋迦朽故之法. He will appear at Jingyang 境陽, in the final period of the "Old Moon" 古月末後時. He will then proceed to Mt. Tiantai 天台山, to Mt. Jiefu 介斧山, and to the [l. 45] Minzi Cave
[49] 閔子窟. He will bear the titles of the Highest One 太上, the Perfect Lord 真君, and the Saint of Lülian Commandery 縷練郡聖. He will arrive with an enormous retinue of countless millions of Bodhisattvas, [l. 50] gods, saints and supernatural animals of all kinds that will appear as auspicious signs 應瑞. [l. 55] The males that escort him will ride heavenly dragon-horses; the females will be carried by golden and silver chariots. Thus they will enter the Magic City through its southern gate.[88] Yueguang stays there as the lord of all countries 百千國主, venerated by all people.

[l. 60–65] When asked where one can escape from the floods, the Great Immortal enumerates several mountains,[89] where one can find refuge: let the people go there, with their aged relatives and young children. But it is also possible to escape from the deluge and from the epidemics by piety, [l. 70–75] strict observance of religious duties, and purity—this applies to members of the clergy as well as to lay believers.

[*1356a10*] Shouluo then asks how to escape from the evil powers 妖邪 that will appear. The Great Immortal explains that there are many kinds of evil powers; one has constantly to be on one's guard, and never believe them. When Yueguang has come, only the good people will get to see him; the sinners will not.

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87 The same number of years needed by Yueguang to establish his ideal rule is mentioned in the apocryphal *Scripture of the Annihilation of the Doctrine* 法滅盡經, T 396, p. 1119b. But there it has the character of a temporary revival, after which the final degeneration sets in (cf. p. 27 above).

88 Here follows a very obscure passage which seems to imply that Yueguang and his retinue move from the Magic City to China: 花 (*var.* 化: *c, d, e*) 城南門入道逍遙北門出信都土地海東流乘船流川置神州孟母曲中涌高樓. For the reading 化城 which is to be preferred, cf. note 78 above.

89 恆山, 五嶽, 勃海雍盧庭, 甘晨山, 覆舟山, 頗資山, 乳羅山.

[l. 80] (Then the conversation suddenly turns to the Magic City): when asked about its general lay-out, the Great Immortal gives a detailed and exuberant description of this heavenly metropolis.[90] It covers a space of more than seven hundred *li* square; (*1356b1*) there are seventy-two gates in its golden walls that stand a thousand feet high. Within this outer enclosure there is the inner city, called Tuṣita 兜率城 which is even more gor-
[50] geous. [l. 85] Tuṣita city itself consists of eight smaller conglomerations, also surrounded by golden walls; its lay-out is strictly geometrical, "with the streets corresponding to each other, and the gates matching each other", like the ideal Chinese city. Here one can see the King of the Doctrine 法王, in his city teeming with people of both sexes.

Shouluo is filled with joy, and tells the Four Assemblies: "The Great Jewel will arrive; do not have profane thoughts!"[91] (*1356b10*) Be pious, exert yourselves to do good, and don't have doubts. Do as I say, [l. 90] practice ascetism 苦行. If you focus your thoughts on this, you will surely reach Non-activity 無爲. The Great Immortal then concludes his description of the Magic City with an account of the many kinds of [l. 95] wonderful music that will resound when Yueguang appears.

(Then the theme of the "evil powers", that was brought up before but was interrupted by the Magic City episode, is resumed): Shouluo declares that he has never been afraid of (common) evil powers, but will there also be very powerful ones? The Great Immortal answers that there will be thirty-six great Māras 魔, who can [l. 100] only be overcome (*1356b20*) by one person, viz. a *kumāra* 童子 who lives in the heaven of the Thirty-three Gods (三十三天, Trāyastrimśa-deva [loka]); his name is the Awesome God (He tian 赫天). [l. 105] He rides through the air on a dragon-horse, and is armed with a supernatural bow. The thirty-six Māras also ride dragon-horses; they are armed with metal staves; *vajra*-clubs, and axes made of *vaiḍūrya*; they run about, shouting "Kill!" There will also be other disasters when Yueguang is about to appear. [l. 110] For seven days and nights the world will be steeped in darkness, and in the dark (*1356c1*) all kinds of demons (yakṣa, rākṣasa, piśāca, etc.) will

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90 A similar but shorter description of the Magic City is found in our second text, the *Zhengming jing*, T 2879, p. 1366a8–18. It is there preceded by a fantastic version of the story of the Buddha's birth, in which Laozi himself is made to play the role of the "physiognomist", the seer Asita. It then states that Śākyamuni in his quest for Enlightenment went from one (mythical) mountain to another; finally he reached Buddhahood on an island in the middle of the ocean, and there created the Magic City.

91 莫如常意: a curious expression that occurs many times in this text. Lit. "Don't have thoughts like (the ones people) commonly have"?

devour innumerable people. Only those who observe the Three Refuges, the Five Commandments, and the rules of Fasting 受持三歸五戒齋法 will escape. "Yueguang will appear in the world; before the Old Moon has come back (= regained strength?), he is to manifest himself 古月未復乃當出現, and those who uphold and cultivate what is good 奉善修善 will see him". [l. 115] People can only avoid the disasters in the region of Yangzhou 陽州, and in certain other places.[92] "When the three great disasters break out, the blood will flow in streams, and the white bones will lie
[51] piled up like mountains; only in the southeast Non-activity (無爲, i.e. Release) can be obtained". Shouluo then requests the Great Immortal to proclaim to the clergy and the lay believers (*1356c10*) that the Great Saint, the King of Light [l. 120] is now in the territory of Han, and that they must devote themselves to meditation and pious works in order to be able to see him. When Yueguang manifests himself, it will first be evil, and later it will be good 前悪後善; don't be like the unbelievers! The Great Immortal (apparently after having fulfilled Shouluo's request) declares that every word of this is true, and he pronounces a [l. 125] solemn oath to confirm this.

When asked if there already are Immortals and Saints dwelling in this world, the Great Immortal affirms this: there are many of them in the world, but since the Old Moon is flourishing 古月興盛 you cannot see them. [l. 130] Firstly, there are seven Sages 賢, whose names are as follows: (*1356c20*) (1) Shi [*xian*] De 石賢得;[93] (2) Yan [*xian*] Ming 嚴賢明; (3) Sun [*xian*] Qi 孫賢奇; (4) Hua [*xian*] De 花賢德; (5) Wu [*xian*] Shi 呉賢使; (6) Zheng [*xian*] Chang 鄭賢常; (7) Guan [*xian*] Bao 觀賢寶; (8) Zhao [*xian*] Si 趙賢思.[94] You can go and visit them. They truly are your (spiritual) Guides 導師, who are able to control life and death 運生死. But you do not need to ask where they are now—they are about to appear in the world, and you will see them if only you are earnest in your mind [l. 135]. When Shouluo asks if there still are others, the Great Immortal produces a second list of eleven names: (1) Qin Chaoshi 秦超世; (2) Pan Daocheng 潘道成; (3) Lu Huiyuan 盧惠遠; (4) Ban Guoxing 板國興; (5) Fu Nanyang 扶男陽; (6) Liu Daogui 劉道貴; (7) Wang Yanshou 王延壽; (8) Zhao Xianzong 趙顯宗; (9) Zhang Daoban 張道板; (10) Gu Shi'an 故世安; (11) Li Luocha 李羅

[92] 唯有陽州, 次有玄免, 固都, 棘城, 柳城, 破資陽河澗.

[93] Read 德 in *c* and *d.*

[94] For these names, in which *xian* may be either a title, or the common element in the eight *ming* (in which case the eight Sages would form a group of "spiritual brothers", with *xian* as the shared generation-element in their names), cf. above, note 81.

剎. They all are moving about in this world, but with your mortal eye 肉眼 you cannot distinguish them from ordinary people. [l. 140] Therefore you must practise (*1357a1*) equanimity 平等 towards all people, in accordance with my orders. There are now in the world sixteen Equanimous Ones 平等, seventy-two True Scholars 正士, and three thousand Sages 賢. They all dwell among men, but they outwardly adapt themselves to the sinful ways [52] of mankind, and pretend to be ignorant fools, or poor and lowly people, or sinners who drink wine, eat meat, and break the rules of fasting by secretly taking food at night. How could one ever distinguish them? [l. 145] Only by the practice of Equanimity can one hope to meet the Sages and Saints.

Shouluo urges the Four Assemblies to propagate his *sūtra* among their teachers, parents, rulers, patrons, friends and other relations. (*1357a10*) In view of the great disasters that are at hand, [l. 150] everyone who hides this scripture and keeps it for himself commits a grave sin, and will be reborn at an inferior level of existence. Using the familiar hyperbolic comparisons of Mahāyāna scriptures, he extols the immense merit of [l. 155] spreading this message to all people, young and old, men and women, in cities, villages and hamlets. It will be accepted by the wise, but fools will reject it.

(*1357a20*) In the meantime, the king of the Country of Gentlemen, his ministers and courtiers, [l. 160] all together more than 3,000 persons, have heard the news that a group of five hundred Immortals is staying at the Taining Monastery. Filled with joy they proceed to the monastery and ask the Great Immortal what is their destination. After having been told that Yueguang's advent is approaching, and that they want to pay him a visit, the king sadly remarks: “By the cultivation of what merit have you, [l. 165] Perfected Men from a western country 西國真人, got the opportunity to enter into this excellent (situation); what good works have enabled you to witness Yueguang's appearance in the world? But we in this far-away country shall not be able to see him”. But the Great Immortal reassures him: there is no reason to be worried, for when Yueguang appears he will be visible everywhere.

The king then expresses the wish to join them, (*1357b1*) and he asks where Yueguang tongzi resides at present. [l. 170] The Great Immortal tells him that Yueguang, the King of Light, is biding his time in the Minzi Cave 閔子窟, under Mt. Hailing 海陵山下, in the mountains of Penglai 蓬萊山. [l. 175] Thereupon the king with a huge crowd of courtiers, officials and common people, altogether 57,000 persons, accompanies the group of five

hundred Immortals[95] on their long and arduous journey over a distance of more than seven thousand *li.* They finally reach (*1357a10*) the Minzi Cave, and there they behold Yueguang tongzi, surrounded by a crowd of three thousand Sages and Saints.

[53] Yueguang's first reaction is one of amazement: you, Immortals, and you, great king; [l. 180] from where do you come, and where are you going? The mountains in this region are steep and inaccessible—how have you been able to reach this spot? When the king explains that he would like to ask some questions regarding Yueguang's advent which, as he has heard, is to take place soon, the latter at first seems unwilling to give any details: "Just cultivate goodness; be diligent and persevering, and do not have profane thoughts. My (time) here is now finished 吾今已竟; what more is there to ask about?" However, after the king [l. 185] has pointed out that he still does not know what norms and rules 法則 one has to follow when the Saintly Ruler 聖君 arrives, Yueguang gives him the following description of the disasters that will break out, and the way to escape from them.

In the coming years 當來之年 there will be a deluge. The water will stand (*1357a20*) forty *li* high on the flat land. It will emerge in the northwest and roll on to the southeast, with huge billows, and a deafening noise like a thunderstorm. [l. 190] You will be carried away by the waves and shout for help. At that time all people will be seized by panic and many will die. Only those who observe the rules 持戒, who are pure, and who strive diligently will be saved, for Yueguang will send a great Nāga-king 大龍王 to pick them up and to put them on a floating mountain 浮山. Rescue will also be given to those who recite the *Guanshiyin Scripture* in one *juan* 觀世音經一卷; who concentrate their minds in meditation; who diligently apply themselves to the work of religious instruction 勸化, and who propagate this scripture [l. 195] without hiding even one word of it. All such people will be saved from a premature death by drowning. However, the deluge will be followed by (*1357c1*) terrible epidemics, with many kinds of strange sufferings, and of those who are stricken by it ninety percent will die.

The king is then told to issue an edict throughout his territory, to the effect that all his subjects, old and young alike (and even young children

[95] It is not clear whether the *bhikṣu* Shoulou is also with them. In any case he is no longer mentioned in the rest of the story.

from one year of age upward, who are already able to walk and speak) must accept [l. 200] the Three Refuges and the Five Rules. "I now reveal to you a secret teaching 密教, that you may know how in an evil world to practice what is good. If henceforward (your sinful conduct) causes you to die a premature death, then you should not (= then it will be too late to) feel remorse! I tell you that the end of the world is at hand 世將欲末; gradually the (forces of) evil will be allowed to arise, and the coming years
[54] will be hard to get through. Turn to goodness in whatever you do, and do not have profane thoughts! [l. 205] When I appear in the world, there will be disaster and sin, but you must only exert yourselves to the utmost in the practice of the good Doctrine, and have no profane thoughts. Evil powers will bring misfortune; heroes will rise up in competition—but (all such sinners) will naturally be annihilated, and they will never see me appearing in the world". (*1357c10*) Protection, release and karmic merit are obtained by those who have recited the *Guanshiyin Scripture* a thousand times, as well as by believers who sincerely [l. 210] practise the Three Refuges and the Five Rules, and who widely propagate this scripture. "For those who spread this holy scripture, I have calculated 算計 the fortunate retribution for a thousand *kalpas*, and (their happiness) can never be exhausted"; the reverse is done for people who hide the text of this scripture, [l. 215] or even one word of it. By doing so, such sinners are covering other people's wisdom-eye 慧眼; time and again they will be reborn blind, (*1357c20*) and even if such a man eventually would reach the state of an Arhat, he would be a blind one. (On the contrary:) let my order be heard by everyone, in cities, towns and (rural) settlements 聚落, from the king and his ministers down to the common people. To all who are disposed to believe and to respectfully accept this scripture, it should be made known, to far and near alike. Let them all hear it, in a thousand cities and a hundred states: [l. 220] I shall appear in the world, north of the Yellow River, and south of the Weak Water, and between those (two rivers) I shall be king in the territory of Han".

The king then asks the King of Light about the origin of this scripture,[96] and Yueguang tells him that it was made by the more than three thousand great Saints of Hailing in common consultation 海陵大聖三千餘人參議所造, and then orders the king and all the other visitors to spread the message

96 I suppose that this refers to the prophecy just pronounced by Yueguang, and not to the *Guanshiyin Scripture* mentioned before.

all over the world—they [l. 225] do not need to come back any more.[97]
[55] Then the king obeys and departs. (When he is about to go), Yueguang tongzi cryptically alludes to a statue (with inscription?) that apparently confirms his prophecy: "If you do not believe what I have just said, you have only to look at the stone image of Kāśyapa—that is (contains?) the prophecy of my appearance in the world" (但看迦葉石像, 是吾出世記耳).[98] (*1358a1*) For the good people there is no need to be afraid—when I appear in the world, they will all reach the state of Nonactivity 無爲. The king and all who are with him are again urged to convert as many people as possible, for even in the present year the (first) difficulties will arise. [l. 230] "Let each of you make a vow to transcend (this) evil world" 過度惡世.

The king and the other visitors pay their respects to Yueguang and depart. After the five hundred Immortals have again settled in the Taining Mountains 太寧山中, they see there a copy of the *Yueguang Tongzi Scripture* 月光童子經 in one *juan*, and they also have some other visions: they see a Bodhisattva seated under an *longhua* 龍華 tree in the City of the Golden Dragon 金龍城, and an Adept who is transmitting this scripture (to the world below) in order to perfect the minds of all beings.[99]

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[97] The text is enigmatic: 等大衆各各分散順化天下不須復迴. I have interpreted 大衆 as referring to the huge crowd of visitors, and 等 as a temporal particle: "until you have . . ., you don't need to come back". But it could also refer to the great "conference" of Saints that has just been mentioned, in which case the phrase would imply that those divine assistants are soon to start their salutary work in the world: "until (this) great Assembly (of Saints) has dispersed, and every one of them is making (the world) comply with his transforming influence, you do not need to come back". My reason for preferring the first interpretation is twofold: in the first place, this phrase is immediately followed by the statement that the king obeyed and departed, and, secondly, there is nothing in the whole story to suggest that the king would ever come back to Penglai.

[98] This phrase is followed by one that is even more cryptic: 善哉索斷合絲作. Does it refer to some kind of line of succession or filiation of saints that has been interrupted and is now to be resumed, here symbolized by a thread that has been broken and is joined again? The theme of the "stone image of Kāśyapa" is unknown to me; it is possible that it has something to do with the old tradition that Mahākāśyapa is awaiting Maitreya's advent inside Mt. Kukkuṭapāda, cf. note 27 above.

[99] From this point onward the text becomes more and more difficult to understand. The Bodhisattva must be Maitreya, who according to a well-known tradition (e.g. T 453 *Maitreya-vyākaraṇa* 彌勒下生經 p. 421c) will realize Enlightenment and deliver his first sermons under a *Nāgapuṣpa* tree 龍花樹. The description of the second vision is very unclear: 見一道人下此經時為一衆生成一切衆生心. The expression 衆生 normally renders *sarvasattva*, "all beings", but it occasionally does occur as a singular: 一衆生 "one being". Does this "one being" here refer to the monk himself, who whilst acting alone, and relying on his individual wisdom, is able to lead all other beings to spiritual perfection? On the other hand, the "explanation" given by the king (cf. below) seems to refer to this vision when it says "(Yueguang will appear, and) perfect the Way of all beings 成一切衆生道; in that case the

[56] The king then "explains" these visions (to his subjects?). [l. 235] The King of the Doctrine 法王 is to be expected; the Saintly King 聖王 is soon to descend. On behalf of all ("virgin" =) unmarried young men and women he will "maintain" 持 one hundred and twenty Sage Lords 賢君 (as overseers?). (*1358a10*) In the years *shen* 申 and *you* 酉 he will preach the Doctrine to all beings, and lead our young men and women to realize the Way. When reading this scripture, one should think deeply about it and (try to) grasp the meaning of these words.[100] Yueguang will soon appear; in his saintly perfection he will manifest himself, in order to perfect the Way of all beings. By reading this scripture one can [l. 240] escape from those disasters (that will break out), and by observing the Rules one will be able to see the King of Light. If one reads the following spell 呪, wild animals, evil spirits and demons will automatically stay away.

Then follows [l. 245] (*1358a20*) a spell in pseudo-Sanskrit of the *dhāraṇī* type, consisting of ten words (46 syllables). The practicant should first wash his hands and rinse his mouth. After one hundred recitations the Bodhisattva (Yueguang) will manifest himself to him, surrounded by a large halo, with a long staff;[101] his face is shining like gold, and on his head he carries a golden flower as big [l. 250] as a carriage wheel. His hands are one and a half foot in length. Do not be afraid when he appears, but merely take your refuge to the Buddha, the Doctrine and the Saṅgha in the dharma-regions of the ten directions of space 十方法界. Deliverance will be earned even by reading this scripture three times. The Buddha knows that all beings have committed many sins, and by clearly understanding (the way to) deliverance they (still) may get rid of (their sins), so that they may escape from the disasters.[102] (*1358b1*) Those who rely on this scripture [l. 255] will be able to visualize the Bodhisattva and see how he
[57] preaches the Doctrine, wearing heavenly garments. Take care not to speak (to the apparition). This person (who is evoked by the practicant) has realized the Way; when (the practicant) perceives the (divine) fragrant

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person who reveals the scripture is Yueguang himself. For that reason I have preferrred to render *daoren* 道人 by "Adept" rather than by "monk".

100 This is followed by a phrase that seems to refer to the number of *electi* of both sexes, but beyond that I do not dare to offer any interpretation: 男取無億女取恆沙男不用取婦

101 萇杖; I suppose that 萇 here is a graphic variant of 長 and does not refer to the tropical fruit called "carambola" (萇楚).

102 The text in the following four columns (253–256), from 明王出世 to 打人無度 is so cryptic that I cannot even try to explain it. It seems to imply that certain persons who are unwilling to accept the message will be reborn as wild beasts or malignant demons.

flowers (that appear) spontaneously, he should not be excited; if he would speak, this person would certainly leave (this) sinful world (and vanish).[103]

In the (fateful) years *shen* and *you*, the father [l. 260] will not know his son, nor will the mother know her daughter. So be mindful of the words of this scripture; change your hearts and change your thoughts, be free from lewd desires, and do not look upon others with wicked intentions (? 不惡眼視). When the Buddha preaches the Doctrine, you yet will have the opportunity to regain your basic intention 得本心—now he is to appear soon, so be diligent and have remorse! At the time of Yueguang's coming, each one Sage will be able to save the lives of ten persons. But do not slander this scripture (by saying that it is untrue), for the Lord of Darkness 闇君 is about to stand up; evil powers are to arise, and only by diligence and perseverance you will get rid of these calamities.

Zhu Daoyi 諸道義[104] will then [l. 265] preach the Doctrine to all beings: (*1858b10*) "If you understand what I say, you will see the King of the Doctrine at once" 若解吾語即見法王. Even if all the monks would die, the practice of the Way would yet not come to an end. But (in any case) many of them will die, for the monks have committed numerous sins: because of this (the clergy) engage in commerce for their livelihood 持生販賣, and because of this the country lacks peace. When (such) monks die, it will happen that (by that very fact) many scoundrels will lose their lives (?) 會構賊兒死多. Only one out of each thousand will be selected (to be saved).[105] So let them, first of all, practise (the right) conduct; for the Saint will soon begin (his rule), the heroes will arise in competition; the time is at hand 時節欲到!

[58] From this point the text completely turns into oracular language that defies all attempts to summarize it in a coherent way. There is an enumeration of signs or portenta that are to be expected in the final period, such as the appearance of a person (Yueguang himself?) in a yellow garment, who is twelve feet tall (L 269 = T 2874, 1358b14); grain covering the whole earth (L 270 = 1358b15); unspecified "abnormal things" 怪 on the fourteenth day of the seventh month, followed by the appearance of the Buddha and an earthquake on the next day (L 271 = 1358b16); a monk transmitting

[103] Needless to say that my translation of this whole description of the *séance* is only tentative. It is followed by the even more enigmatic 第一用意百日在時不用癡貪: does it mean that the practicant has to observe a period of mental purification lasting a hundred days?

[104] Apparently meant to be a clerical name, but Zhu 諸 remains puzzling.

[105] The reading 千介拔十介 of S 2109 (= T 2874 1358b13) is garbled; cf. note 74 above.

(this?) scripture (L 272 = 1358b17); an epidemic that breaks out when people calumniate this teaching, and a huge bird[106] whose feet measure one *zhang* (L 274 = 1358b18); the emergence of Sages who have cultivated the Way in the Ziyan Mountains 紫巖山中 for more than seven hundred years (L 274 = 1358b19), etc. It is followed by a conversation between Yueguang and the Buddha,[107] in which mention is made of a number of Bodhisattvas who will manifest themselves in this world (L 278 = 1358b23–29). Some kind of evil is associated with Luoyang (L 287 = 1358c3), and there are some very cryptic allusions to postures or movements of fingers and hands (L 289–292 = 1358c4–8). There will be great happiness, for all sinners have gone, and everybody, both male and female, will realize the Way (L 292 = 1358c8). The ancient Buddha Dīpaṃkara 定光 will dwell among men, and so will Vimalakīrti 維摩, who pretends to lead a luxurious life with many wives and concubines, but who actually is a great Bodhisattva destined to reach Buddhahood (L 296–301 = 1358c11–18).

Variant Readings

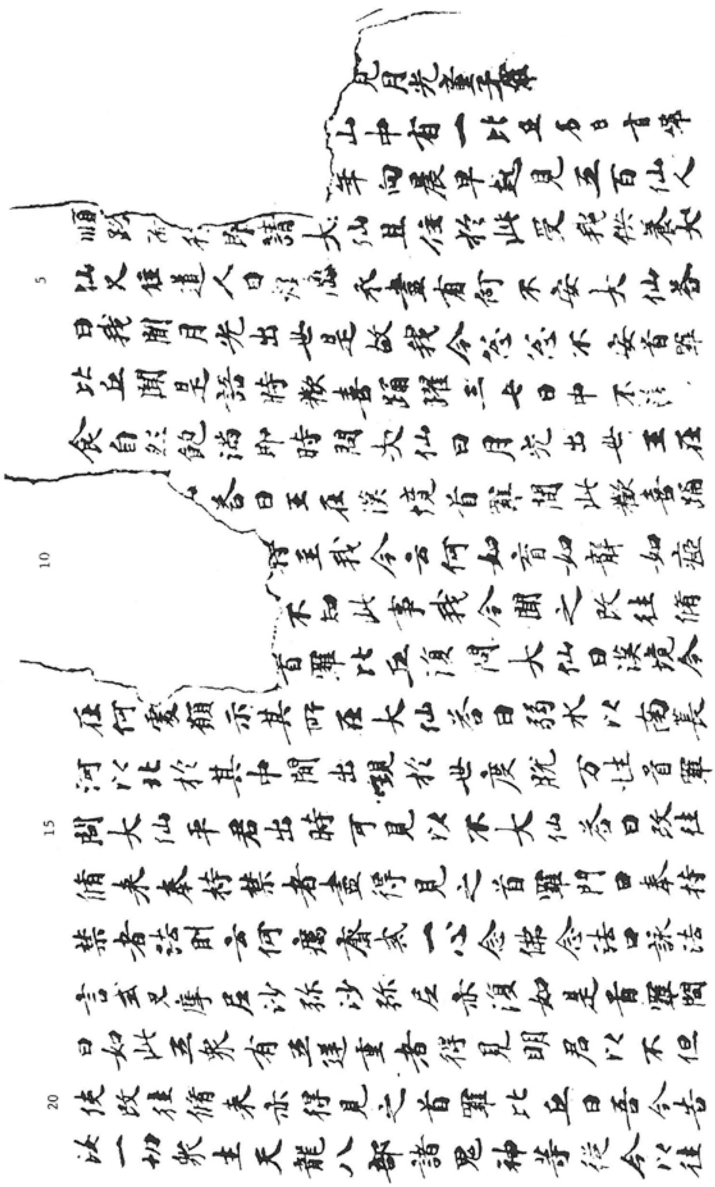
(Ms. *b* = Peking no. 292:8275; *c* = S. 2697, reproduced in the *Taishō Canon* as T 2873; *d* = S. 6881; *e* = S. 1811; "1." followed by a number refers to the columns in ms. *a* = Peking no. 292:8274 that has been reproduced above).

1. 53 鳥：偽 *e*; l. 56 花：花 *c d*; l. 93 其：+意 *bcde*; l. 97 諸：詩 *c*; l. 101 此：*c*
om.; l. 103 頗: 波 *c*; l. 106 三十:卅 *e*; l. 107 頗: 波 *c*; l. 125 誑: *c e om.*; l. 131 得:
德 *c e*; l. 133 名: + 賢 *c e*; l. 135 有: + 見 *c e*; l. 171 萊: 來 *c*; l. 194 通: 是 *c*; l. 199
如: 知 *c*; l. 211 身: + 命 *c*; l. 215—: *c om.*; l. 217 乃: 及 *c*; l. 218 路: c *om.*; l. 219
切: *c om.*; 1.221 來: 出 *c*; 1.225 歡: 觀 *c*; l. 229 難: *c om.*; l. 235 得: 待 *c*; l. 244 澤:
澤 *c*; 鬱: + 離 *c*; l. 247 兔: 菟 *d* (2x); l. 249 紫: 此 *c*; l. 252 少: + 爲 *c*; l. 253 說:
脫 *c*; 1.254 莫: *c om.*; l. 254 正念. . . . 正身: 念正想正意正肩 *c*; l. 262 卽: 中 *c*; l.
[59] 262 道罷 *c om.*; l. 263 不得: + 識 *d*; l. 268一: 十 *c*; l. 268 个: 介 (2x); l. 269 聖:
+ 人 *c*; l. 274 烏: 鳥 *c e*; l. 278 衆生: *c om.*; l. 284 堅: 賢 *c*; l. 291 善: 義 *c*; l. 298
利: 朔 *c*; l. 298 个: 界 *c*; l. 300 摩: + 時 *c*; l. 306 粗: 祖 *c*.

[106] Most manuscripts read 鳥; S 6861 has 烏 "crow".

[107] Apparently the Buddha Śākyamuni is meant, as he is said to dwell under the Aśvattha 波多 tree, i.e. the *Ficus Religiosa* under which Śākyamuni attained Enlightenment. Such a reappearance of the last Buddha at the final epoch is not so amazing, for, as the text tells us (below, l. 296), even the ancient Buddha Dīpaṃkara, from whom the future Śākyamuni many aeons ago obtained his *vyākaraṇa*, will manifest himself again.

These *variae lectiones* show that the five manuscripts can be divided into two groups: *a b d* and *c e.* Both represent a single recension of the scripture, but the first group is very homogeneous, and superior to the second one. In the second group, *c* and *e* share a number of variants; *c* therefore belongs to the same stemma, but has added a great number of scribal errors of its own.



更別作心莫如常意月光臨出大災將至无
有疑也當來大水災至兼有疾病流行百
姓飢饉英雄覺起百姓无有安寧受吾勑者
可得免災難難首羅告曰一切諸比丘及以比
丘尼從今以往坐禪執心好婬煩惱賊者皆
度惡世能誦大乘經者捨離高心及以我慢
如此之人亦得度世除此以下勸化興福柔和
忍辱捨嫉妬心如此之人亦得度世優婆塞
優婆夷受持三歸五戒行十善者歲三月
六齋如此之人亦得度世受吾勑者皆得
度世比丘僧比丘尼從今以往不聽犯五逆又
以第一偏不聽飲酒食宍无度飲食捋節不
聽非持受吾教者必得度世優婆塞優婆夷
從今以往堅持五戒奉持齋法歲三長齋月六
齋食莫非時如此之人亦得度世吾復告四輩
衆曰受吾勑者皆得度世除不至心及以淨
盡首羅比丘稽首問曰明君出世法則云何
土境何似壇場闊狹大仙答曰卅六國境場
如是首羅問曰當化之時万民有留調之名
次復輸之太平治化當用幾載大仙答曰



當五十七載焉欲顯釋迦朽故之法首羅門
大仙日月光出世當用何時古月末後特出
境陽普告諸賢者天台山引路遊覩至介斧
山又到閼子崖列魯蒋一号太上二号真君
三号錢鍊郡聖首羅聞此語特歡喜踊躍跳
踉復起善哉善哉希有之法今得聞之非已私
也首羅問大仙日月光大衆焉有幾數大仙答
日不可稱計大仙日當出之時二十億菩薩
三万六千億天人諸天童子百千億不可
稱數皇天黑馬嘔嘔伊伊康讓道對神嗶
阿難舍利弗大目揵連等三十六龍王四十九
於四十八鳥七十雨師迦陵頻伽鳥麒麟鳳凰
及三足神烏一切應瑞盡皆出矣一鳴龍馬
數千億万不可稱計畢乘天龍馬女乘百福
金銀車男得金銀羞女乘瑠璃軒花城南
門入道遙北門出信都土地海泉流乘船洗
川置神州並毋曲中蒲高樓月光童子在中
遊千百國至四方來成唱諸歎朗然鳴龍憘
建道場及有五逆者逆從凡人鄉首羅問曰
閻浮里地願首得道者大仙荅曰閻浮里地

亦有少分得者首羅問日可有幾救 大仙曰
有八万四千恒河沙首羅問日當來水灾何
處得免恒山五岳盡皆免水灾動海 雍處
庭亦得免水灾甘晨山亦得免水灾霞舟
山亦得免水灾頗資山亦得免水灾乳羅
山亦得免水灾如此大灾皆得免之受影
者當得去小令往就之首羅問日更何方計得
免水難大仙答日更有一方亦得免之首羅欲
盡更問之日顧說其意大仙答日敬信三寶礼
佛念誦敬比丘僧侍奉礼拜敬信不懈專念
不然如此之人得免大水之難首羅復問大仙
日作何方計得免疾病之灾大仙日比丘僧
比丘尼優婆塞優婆夷從今以往持戒奉齋
皆伏清潔男女大小旅行知語皆應受戒如
吾所勅莫如常意可得度脫首羅日復 作
何方計得免妖耶之灾大仙吉日妖耶乃至
多種受吾勅者慎莫信之月光出世唯有善
者盡得見之五逢大惡衆生終不見也首羅
問日城池卷陌其事云何大仙答日城池卷
陌縱廣七百餘里高千尺下基千尺激城五

百餘尺開七十二門城作紫磨金色中有光
淳城高千尺下基千尺激城亦五百尺亦作
紫磨金色明中五百餘里亦開七十二門中
有八城各三十餘里亦作紫磨金色各有千
巷巷巷相當門門相望出見法王如此城壞
等男女皆悉充滿首羅聞之歡喜踊躍无量
善哉善哉大願將果首羅告四衆言大寶將
至莫作常意決定脩善莫作狐疑吾見大仙
以來消息審之无有疑惑但從吾意脩善奉
道精懃苦行莫如常意思之念之必至无爲首
羅聞大仙曰受樂之時亦有琴樂以不大仙
答曰月光出世琴有多種首羅曰願說其
大仙答曰琴戲吹詠无量衆上音聲道遙
无極振大法鼓唯大法雷振動三千大千世
界種留爵而着琴戲囊暢三十六鼓音聲當
命之時諸天龍宮鬼鬼而動首羅比丘問大仙
日向者妖耶我不畏之除此小耶更有大耶
以不大仙曰月光出世之時必有大魔而出
首羅聞曰大魔出時可卻以不大仙答曰唯
有一大能卻此魔者爲何人也大仙答曰三

十三天有一童子名曰赫天乘天龍馬從空而
來捉頭梨子揉沈萷唯有此人能却此大魔
首羅比丘問大仙曰有何方能却唯有此一
人能却餘人不能大仙荅曰如此大魔三十
六人各乘龍馬香帶四十二金杖左手捉金
金剉杵右手捉頭梨斧走來攖去踏石決踝
勉達永階但言唱煞无有當者首羅問大仙
曰除此大魔更有何灾大仙荅曰月光臨出餘
有灾也首羅問曰灾復云何大仙荅曰當
有七日闇當之時有夜叉羅刹毗舍闍鬼魅
鬃茶鬼飛行羅刹食人无量唯有受持三歸
五戒奉行齋法如此之人皆得度脫首羅問
日月光出世古月末後乃當出現奉善脩善
皆得見之首羅曰更復何處得免衆灾大仙
荅曰唯有陽州次有玄兗固都秣城柳城破
資陽河潤於此之城寂是寃良三相大灾
起血流城河白骨如山唯有東南乃得无篤
大仙荅曰首羅言好勅衆僧及以白衣坐禪
誦經懃脩三業莫如常意明王大聖今在漢
境未見之間催厭福德莫如常意汝信脩善

奉善月光出世時前惡後善惡世難度好自
勑屬更別作心莫如不信大仙荅曰吾當虛
言若不尒者使我當來之世金剛力士手捉
金杵碎我身體猶如微塵我若虛言誑汝衆
生當來之世身當如是首羅問大仙曰而今世
間頗有仙人賢聖以不大仙荅曰賢聖仙人
世間无量首羅問曰何人是也大仙荅曰賢古
月興盛是故不見耳首羅問曰賢士之人名
号是誰大仙荅曰我說其名首羅曰唯願說
之大仙告曰石賢得嚴賢明孫賢育范賢
德吳賢使鄧賢當觀賢實趙賢思此是八
賢名字汝今可往就之真汝導師能逢生死苦
羅曰今在何處大仙荅曰今當出世何復問也
但當嚴心時至有之首羅復稽除此八人更有
賢不大仙荅曰脈更有之何人是也大仙荅曰
秦趙世潘道氏盧惠顏板國興狀男陽劉道
貴王延壽趙頭宗張道板故世安李羅斜如諸
賢士皆遊巡世間汝今宾眼不能別之得聞吾
經常行平等何以故太賢諸賢難分別故
受吾勑者宜應平等十六正士七十二賢三

千人俱如是大士在人間也不可識別或見
瞋狂或復愚癡或復闇鈍寒貧下賤或飲
酒食宍或復夜食破齋如此示現何能識之
示衆生有三妻有見相隨順世法難可了知雅
有平等得值賢聖也首羅比丘告諸四衆比
丘比丘尼優婆塞優婆夷大災將至莫如常意
其有本師父母國主檀越朋友知識因緣親
感善得吾經者皆示之莫問近遠得吾經者
懃行流布使一切聞之不聽隱匿吾經者當來
之世必墮惡道首羅比丘曰設有一人捨三千
大千國土象馬七珍及國内人民穀帛財物
以用布施不如有人流通吾經諸比丘前功
德信如百分首羅曰吾得吾經者懃行流
布城邑聚落男女大小皆使聞之其有盈吾
經者現世不吉當來得病首羅曰有智信之
愚者棄之首羅曰吾經當來皆應也莫作不
信一切衆生宜應奉行歡喜信樂此經如法
多有潤澤尒時君子國王大臣宰相一切士
官三千餘人各聞太寧寺上有五百仙人歎
喜踊躍各各嶽駕詣太寧寺中仙人所稽首

問日大仙從何所來欲至何許願説其意大
仙日我聞月光童子出世是故我來欲到彼
處王及大臣聞是語時歡喜踊躍傾心西望而
不可以西國真人脩何功德得值入善作何善
業得見月光出世而我國人遠而不見大仙
荅日月光出世人皆普見王今云何生懊歎
心也王聞普見并大臣及諸人民皆大歡喜
各持獻篤今當去來王問大仙日月光童子
今在何許大仙荅日善哉善哉大王善聽吾
説月光明王今三千大衆在蓬萊山中海陵
山下閃子窟所以思惟時至現也君子國大臣
宰相一切士官并及國內人民各白大仙日
今隨從大仙至月光所聽見以不大仙日月
光明王譬如大海亦如大地終不生疑作
留難也王及大臣并及人民隨從大仙有王
万七千人去君子國七千餘里到蓬萊山中海
陵山下閃子窟所見月光童子三千徒衆諸
賢聖等皆集於此月光童子問諸大仙并
及大王今從何所來欲何所至此中嶮難危
人行步汝今云何能來至此王日聞世尊今

欲出世故來奉聞月光童子曰但當脩善慈
行精進莫如常意吾今已竟何須復現問大
王曰我聞聖君出世不知法則云何願說其
意我當如心脩善月光童子曰汝若不知當
爲說之月光曰善聽復當善念善思念之內
著心中莫如常意吾見說之當來之年必有
水災高於平地四十餘里當水來時從西北
角出東南而流大水陽波叫聲雷電霹靂
不得爲喻汝復涌出遲波叫聲當介之時人
皆惶怖迫死者多唯有持戒淨潔求慈度世
月光童子使大龍王大引人慱著浮山設復
有人造觀世音經六卷設復有人禪思一心
設復有人於惡世慈行勸化設復有人流通
經不令隱蔽章句文字慈行勸樂如此人
等皆得度世不爲水災之所死設復除不至
心及毒命盡月光復告大王言當來三災疾
病流行十傷九亡種種果患皆當死命王當
信之各勅國內一歲以上能行如語應受三
歸五戒若老若少皆應勸盡使受三歸五戒
奉行善法如是之人皆得度世除不善不至

心反命壽吾今寄教語汝使知惡世流行善
法後致死喪莫生悔心吾告汝等世將欲求
漸令惡起來年難過好作向善莫如常意吾
當出世定亦不善但當努力懃行善法莫如
常意號耶不祥英雄覺起自然磨滅終不見
吾出見於世汝等善哉莫如常意受吾教者
誦觀世音千遍防身度世揺獲善果又須有
人各受三歸五戒今當行之莫如常意懃行
此經若老若少皆使聞之得度惡世誤後
有人流布此經處處流傳使人聞知得度身
以懃流布此經者亦得度世月光日流行此
經典者我於千劫中筭計是人福報終不能
盡說復有人生疑不信我於千劫中筭是人
罪報終不能盡兼復隱文字章句一點一畫
不令人聞覆人慧眼故世世常盲无所復見
乃至羅漢帝不離音笃覆慧眼故斷鄣法
路乃猴是殃受吾勑者城邑聚落國王大臣
一切人民皆得聞之能有信心崇奉此經莫
問遠近應往遍流使人聞之千城百國皆使
聞之吾當來世黃河以北弱水以南於其中

閻王於漢境大王日明王言此經從何所出月
光告大王言洨陵大聖三千餘人恭議所造
月光告大王言等大衆各各分散順化天下
不須復迴介時大王受教奉行歡喜而去月
光童子日向者所說汝若不信但看迦葉石
像是吾出世記耳善哉索斫合然作万有善
衆生順莫驚怖吾當出時盡皆得充爲王又
大衆歡喜奉行近化不惓吾告汝等令氣難
到汝宜精進莫如常意各各發願過度惡世
大仙国王并及臣民歡喜奉行作礼而去五
百仙人在太寧山中并見月光童子經一卷
金龍城中見一菩薩龍華樹下見一道人
下此經時爲一衆生成一切衆生心王日爲
汝分別解說法王欲得聖君欲下爲一切童
男童女持百二十賢君申百年爲衆生說法
成我童男童女成道讀此經時善思取此語
男取充億女取恒沙男不用取婦月光童子
欲出聖成欲現成一切衆生道善讀此經語
可離此難月光菩薩欲來下說持戒可得見
明君善欲讀此呪時師子虎狼復惡耶祝

常百鬼自然去一切衆生狂死者多爲一切衆
生貴佛正法
優丘尼優丘尼　但澤但澤　髒離髒　烏呼烏呼吒
薩呼薩呼　但又但又　又阿鬼池池呼尼　要他要他
索由冨尭　尼冨尭尼
若讀呪時淨洗手頼口讀此呪使人晨夜
安隱即見菩薩讀此呪百遍見菩薩放大光
明現在人前搖杖一面如紫金色頭上金華大
如車輪手長一尺半和來入時莫作怖迫歸
命佛歸命法歸命僧十方法界三讀此經
皆得解脫世事玄番衆生作罪不步分別
解說可離令得免難明君出時犯此[illegible]
君必見我慎莫迫怖好正念正想正意正身
得見我身有人必難此人或作師子虎狼手
提金杖打人无度依此經語行菩薩行可得
見菩薩說法現身著天衣慎莫言語此人即
成道見香華自然不得動心言語此人必離惡
世第一用意百日在時不用瘦食申酉年時公
不識况無不識女憶此經語可得改心改意
第一不婬欲第一不惡眼視佛爲衆生說法

還淨本心佛欲出世懇心懺悔即見月光菩薩一介賢者得諸小人此經不得誹謗聞呂欲起娛耶欲興懃精進即離此難諸道義焉一切衆生即說法若解吾語即見法王道人死盡不羅道罷道行死者多道人作罪不少由是特生賊責由此國不安寧道人死時會撲狀兒死多道意師僧欲責居僧千介拔一介第一用行聖欲始英雄欲起時節欲到特黃衣長丈二粳米普地生懇心作福可得見此事思此經語即得見我身七月十四日其會一恆十五日見佛地動莫作迫怖見道人漸安義下此經語誹謗即有大病患起復見一老烏足長一丈後見賢者脩道以來七百餘年隱徽山中復見一道人身著天衣賢者見之即以供養七日道人師徒三百餘年道人口語讀經可得免難願佛波多樹下爲一切轉讀視見衆生衆生死盡月光童子復發世尊衆生可化佛語月光童子前頭隨意即復肆羅五蓮甚多舌何可度佛復語月光童子佛復語四天龍王衆生可捧隨因緣起


須眡百二十賢君除卻衆生好惡欲分別佛
光菩薩普光菩薩咸播普賢功德不少白諸
國土衆王菩薩堅固菩薩見在人間千村正有
一村万里有長佛欲見出語衆生惡心作精進
可得見佛若誹謗之人説家獄畫定隨地獄
永不見佛佛欲出世惡精進比道欲知比難
洛陽四西欲知比惡在於瑩西須有瑩北香
有吾弟子解吾口語即我弟子指手心上乃
思惟思之不但省後頭有杆十手相指喚旅
赫自去善哉童子災後快樂由欲末頭雨手
相拍稱然自去善男子耶快以來惡人去畫
欲大樂惡人後不問女婦畫成道乃一精進
可得免此難佛後有大慈悲快樂衆生不摇
衆生心不迴畏衆生死畫有緣值我无緣索
索自去維摩共之定光在人中維摩相妻
婦人中使人不識作行世帝下香化人維摩
利大各四件五里直東維摩有三个兕維摩
度人无崖詐人間望行過溢无婦行衆生
敢得此行看維摩節欲到无量衆生恢兵
維摩度人決得成佛維摩貪財盗語一切

衆生懃心精進可浮見維摩諸道義區
此島傳海下此經即見王僧廣行徒七人見
此島燒香歎盡踊躍七日不食若一切衆生
閒我語聲懃心精進慎莫畏意惡欲死盡
欲大乘資糧不輸

首羅比丘經

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PERSPECTIVES IN THE STUDY OF CHINESE BUDDHISM[1]

If I, first of all, may express my gratitude to the Royal Asiatic Society for its decision to institute this lecture in memory of Paul Demiéville, please believe that this is more than a ritual gesture. He, indeed, was a person to be remembered both as a man and as a scholar. I shall not speak about his human qualities, for it is impossible to do justice to them in a few words. As a scholar, he was a man of astonishing breadth of vision, as is shown by the many different fields which he covered: Chinese philosophy, Chinese literature; historiography; Sino-Indian studies; the history of Chinese Buddhism, to mention only his main fields of interest, all of which were based on a truly stupendous erudition. For in his case breadth was always combined with depth, accuracy, and utter reliability; with the patient and painstaking labour of philology. Needless to say that, faced with the task of giving a lecture that bears his name, I feel both honoured and embarrassed, for I know that I, at best, can only do justice to one of the fields he covered, the study of Chinese Buddhism—an area in which he made his most outstanding contributions. It is true that in doing so he worked in line with a great tradition in French sinology, alive ever since the heroic times of Stanislas Julien, that had also been carried on by his teacher Édouard Chavannes and his elder colleagues Paul Pelliot and Henri Maspero. However, it remains true that, also in this field, no other scholar has equalled Paul Demiéville in scope and depth, for his studies cover almost the whole field, from the earliest treatises on *dhyāna* to late Chinese Buddhist iconography; from the most sophisticated products of Buddhist philosophy to popular Buddhist literature, and from the most rational type of scholasticism to the utter irrationality of those early Chan masters that were so dear to him. His works constitute a vantage-point from which we can overlook the field, and plan future inroads; and if to-day we see some new perspectives, we can only do so by standing on his shoulders.

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[1] This paper was first delivered as the Paul Demiéville Memorial Lecture at the Society's meeting of the 14th May 1981.

But even from that vantage-point my view is limited, and the title of this lecture too presumptuous. I merely want to develop one perspective and I shall mainly confine myself to the medieval period, covering what Arthur F. Wright has called the periods of Domestication and Independent Growth,[2] i.e. from the 4th century, when Buddhism penetrated into the higher strata of society, to the 8th century, when it had become firmly established at all social levels, and had developed various typically Chinese schools or movements of great originality.

Let me present the gist of what I have to say in the form of three paradoxes. First, that our view of Chinese Buddhism as a historical phenomenon is greatly *obscured* by the abundance of our source materials. Second,
[162] that if we want to define what was the normal state of medieval Chinese Buddhism, we should concentrate on what seems to be *abnormal*. Third, if we want to complete our picture of what this Buddhism really was, we have to look outside Chinese Buddhism itself.

Let us start with what is most basic, and have a critical look at our source materials. Apart from information from secular literature, and the data yielded by epigraphy and archaeology, the bulk of those materials is contained in that vast body of texts known as the Chinese Buddhist Canon. Buddhist scholars have, with understandable professional pride, commented on the immensity of its size and the rich diversity of its contents; and they are right. The Chinese Buddhist Canon is, indeed, an enormous collection of all kinds of texts: earlier and later translations of works belonging to various schools and trends; indigenous Chinese commentaries and scholastic treatises; collections of monastic discipline of at least five Indian schools; Chinese polemic treatises; pilgrims' travelogues and geographical works; biographies; bibliographies; the collected sayings of Chan masters, and so on. About two-thirds of this corpus consists of translations, dating from the 2nd century on. Closely related to this section are Buddhist catalogues compiled through the medieval period; some of these are huge *catalogues raisonnés* that are among the best products of traditional Chinese bibliographical science—since early times a major field of interest in that book-centered civilization. A third major category concerns the Chinese exegesis of Buddhist scriptures, and other scholastic works belonging to the schools of Chinese Buddhism.

The production of translations and the Chinese interpretation of Buddhism on the basis of such texts have always been regarded as the two

[2] Cf. Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History*, Stanford, 1959, ch 2 and 3.

main pillars of Chinese Buddhism. It is not without reason that the categories *yijing* 譯經 "translators" and *yijie* 義解 "exegetes" form the first and by far the largest sections in Buddhist biographies. Later historians likewise have devoted most of their attention to those two most prestigious activities of the Chinese Buddhist church: the role of the great foreign missionaries and translators and their Chinese entourage; and the development of Chinese schools of scriptural exegesis and scholastic speculation. The picture is completed by information from two other types of sources: the Buddhist bibliographies that provide the introduction of Buddhism through translated texts with a chronological framework, and the mass of data furnished by Buddhist biography. Let us, then, have a closer look at the nature of those basic materials. How were they produced? By whom and for whom?

It appears that in the earliest period, when Buddhism had not yet penetrated into the élite, translation was a matter of private enterprise. The foreign missionary was surrounded by a group of Chinese followers, both monks and laymen, of moderate literary education, who assisted him in producing the rather crude Chinese versions; the whole thing was an
[163] informal affair, sponsored by local believers, to whom we owe the hundreds of archaic Chinese versions[3] that we still find in the Canon.

However, around CE 400 this situation started to change, for as Buddhism by that time had begun to penetrate into the highest circles, including the court, the sponsoring of translation enterprises (a meritorious work *par excellence*) started to become monopolized by the ruling powers. The first grandiose manifestation of this shift was the huge "translation project" carried out by the Kuchean master Kumārajīva, under the auspices of the ruler of a proto-Tibetan state in northern China. After his arrival in 402, at imperial invitation, Kumārajīva was supplied with a large team of assistants, and the work was done within the palace precincts.[4] Around that time we see the same shift take place in other political centres, both

[3] I use this term of what in Chinese Buddhist bibliography is called *guyi* 古譯, denoting Chinese versions produced before the introduction of a more sophisticated translation idiom and the elaboration of a much more diversified technical vocabulary in the last quarter of the 4th century.

[4] According to his biography (*Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集, *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 (=T) 2145, j. 14, p. 101b, reproduced in *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, T 2059, j. 2, p. 332b), Kumārajīva was lodged in the Ximing Pavilion 西明閣 in the imperial Xiaoyao Park 逍遙園 "in order (there) to translate and produce the scriptures"; this is confirmed by colophons and introductions to versions made by Kumārajīva and his team, 17 of which are stated to have been translated "in the Xiaoyao Park".

in the north and in the south. In the far north-west, in present-day Kansu, translations were made at the instigation and under the patronage of a local non-Chinese dynasty.[5] In the south, the two great translators of the early 5th century, Guṇavarman and Guṇabhadra, both undertook their work at imperial invitation, and they were "placed" by the emperor in one of the great, state-sponsored monasteries at the capital.[6] This development is continued in the 6th century, when state-sponsored Buddhism flourished both in the northern empire of the Tuoba Wei, and in the southern territory of Liang. Nearly all the important translators were directly associated with the court, working in a restricted number of top-class monasteries; Paramārtha is the only exception. The size of the project sometimes was quite impressive: the great translator Bodhiruci was assisted by a staff of 700 monks.[7]

We observe the same trend in two related fields: the compilation of bibliographies, and the formation of collections of scriptures. The earliest catalogues were made in the 4th century by members of the first generation of "scholar-monks" on their own initiative, inspired by a mixture of religious zeal and scholarly curiosity. But the matter was soon taken over. The *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集, completed in CE 515 by the prominent

[5] In the territory of the Northern Liang 北涼, ruled by the Xiongnu house of Juqu 沮渠. Both Juqu Mengxun 蒙遜 (r. 401–433) and his son and successor Juqu Mujian 牧犍 (r. 433–439) sponsored the activities of various translators, the most important among whom was Dharmakṣema who at the request of Juqu Mengxun produced, *inter alia*, the so-called "Northern version" of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* in CE 414–419 (cf. preface and colophon reproduced in *CSZJJ*, T 2145, j. 8, p. 59c and p. 60a).

[6] Guṇavarman was invited by the Liu Song emperor Wen all the way from Java: after his arrival at Jiankang in CE 431 he was lodged in Jetavana Monastery Zhihuan si 祇洹寺 in the capital (cf. *CSZJJ*, T 2145, j. 14, p. 104b; *GSZ*, T 2059, j. 341a). This was also where, in CE 435, Guṇabhadra was made to stay after he had been escorted from Canton by a special imperial emissary (*CSZJJ*, j. 14, p. 105c; *GSZ*, j. 3, p. 344a). The Jetavana Monastery had been founded by the courtier Fantai 范泰 in CE 420 (cf. *GSZ*, j. 7, p. 368c and *Songshu* j. 60, biography of Fantai, p. 1623) for the priest Huiyi 慧義, who only a few years earlier had supported the dynastic claims of the future founder of the Liu Song, Liu Yu, by providing the latter with "auspicious objects" revealed to Huiyi by the "spirit Mt. Song" *songgao lingshen* 嵩高靈神 (in CE 417; for this curious story cf. *GSZ*, loc. cit.). It was Huiyi himself who had designed the lay-out of the Jetavana monastery, which under the Liu Song flourished as an important centre of Buddhist activities. The status of Huiyi, and the fact that after the Liu Song the monastery is hardly ever mentioned any more, suggest that this institution had a special relation with the ruling family.

[7] *XGSZ*, T 2060, j. 1, p. 428a. Cf. the analogous treatment given by the Northern Qi emperor Wenxuan 文宣 to Narendrayaśas when the latter arrived at the capital Ye 鄴 in CE 556 (ibid., j. 2. p. 432c).

Vinaya master Sengyou—himself clearly a member of the clerical establishment—appears to have been the last bibliography compiled on a private basis. But around the same date two other works had been compiled by imperial order, and, in fact, contained a description of the palace collection of Buddhist scriptures.[8] In the north we observe the same shift from private and informal to state-sponsored and official.[9]

After the reunification of the empire under the Sui, this shift was completed, both in the field of translation activities and in that of bibliography. Almost all translators of the Sui and Tang directly worked under court sponsorship, which also meant government supervision, in accordance with the rather strict principles of Tang religious policy.[10] They are formally invited to do their work; to that end they are installed in some of the major metropolitan temples, usually official state temples established
[164] to perform rituals for the benefit of state and dynasty; or even inside the

[8] In CE 515, Sengshao 僧紹 had compiled a "Catalogue of scriptures kept in the Buddha-hall in the Hua-lin Park" *Hualin fodian zhongjing mulu* 華林佛殿眾經目錄 at the order of emperor Wu. Since the emperor was not satisfied with Sengshao's work, he again commissioned the famous scholar-monk Baochang 寶唱 to produce a better catalogue. Baochang thereupon compiled his *Lidai zhongjing mulu* 歷代眾經目錄, which he submitted to the throne in CE 518 (Cf. *XGSZ*, T 2060, j. 1, p. 426c; *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記, T 2034, j. 11, p. 94b; P. Pelliot in *T'oung Pao*, XXII, 1923, 257ff.) Throughout the Six Dynasties period, the Hualin yuan was a famous imperial park in the northern outskirts of the capital. It originally had been a hunting-park of the rulers of Wu. Since the late 5th century it had housed a court-sponsored Buddhist temple that especially under the Liang emperor Wu became the most prestigious centre of upper-class Buddhism. It was here that the pious ruler organized the gorgeous Buddhist rituals and preaching-sessions in which he himself took part, and that were attended by thousands of monks and laymen.

[9] The first Buddhist catalogue made in the north by imperial order was a (now lost) *Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄 compiled between 500 and 534 by the layman Li Kuo 李廓 (cf. *XGSZ*, T 2060, j. 1, p. 428[c]). The work appears to have been a list of the imperial collection of Buddhist texts that existed before the Wei capital was moved from Luoyang to Ye in CE 534.

[10] No less than 25 out of the 33 known foreign and Chinese translators of Sui and Tang times are explicitly stated to have worked under imperial sponsorship. Among them we find all the more prominent and productive translators of that period: Amoghavajra, Bodhiruci, Jinagupta, Narendrayaśas, Prabhākaramitra, Śīkṣānanda, Subhākarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, Xuanzang, and Yijing. In a number of cases such masters were expressly summoned to the capital in order to engage in translation activities (e.g. Narendrayaśas and Jinagupta in 582; Prabhākaramitra in 627; Bodhiruci in 693, and Śīkṣānanda in 695).

palace.[11] Teams of assistants, occasionally even including officials,[12] are assigned to the work. Still later, in the second part of the 10th century, the first Song emperor ordered a last, artificial outburst of translation activities, and at that time bureaucratization had become complete: the scriptures were produced by a bureau, staffed with clerical and non-clerical officials of various ranks. But already in Tang times there is an interesting connection between the translation work and the "official" collection of canonical works, for we repeatedly are told that a certain Chinese version, once produced, was scrutinized before it was *ru zang* 入藏, "entered into the Canon".[13] We see the same connection in our bibliographies, all of which are, since Sui times, official compilations made by clerical committees, and respectfully submitted to the throne. Now what conclusion can we draw from all this? A picture starts to emerge, and that picture is none too encouraging for anybody who would like to get an impression of Chinese Buddhism in its totality: a tiny clerical establishment is working at imperial order in a handful of top-level official monasteries; they are charged with the production of texts, obviously as a magical protection for state and dynasty; the production of those texts is to some extent regulated; their inclusion into the Canon (apparently an imperial prerogative) certainly is. The texts are subjected to clerical censorship under imperial supervision—and, as we shall see, it could at

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[11] In Sui and Tang times, the bulk of Buddhist translations was produced in only a few centres. In Chang'an, translation activities were virtually concentrated in three famous court-sponsored temples: the Da xingshan si 大興善寺, founded by the Sui emperor Wen in 582, and of paramount importance throughout Sui and Tang times; the Da ci'en si 大慈恩寺, established in 646 and made famous by the activities of Xuanzang and his translation team, and the Ximing si 西明寺 founded in 657 by emperor Gaozong. In Luoyang there had been a short period of translation activities in the early 7th century. After the Sui emperor Yang had moved the capital from Daxing to Luoyang, he ordered the establishment of a translation bureau (*fanjing guan* 翻經館) with a clerical staff of foreign and Chinese experts; it was here that the Indian master Dharmagupta produced a number of Chinese versions. The second period of large-scale translation activities in Luoyang covers the last years of the 7th and the early 8th century, notably under the reign of empress Wu. At that time the most important centre of translation was one of empress Wu's favourite Buddhist institutions, the Fo shouji si 佛授記寺.

[12] e.g. the translation team that was set up by imperial order in CE 629, and which, apart from 19 monks with specialized tasks in the actual work of translation also included three high officials charged with final editing and general supervision (cf. *XGSZ*, T 2060, j. 3, p. 440a–b).

[13] For a survey of texts officially "admitted to the Canon", and the lists of such texts (*ru zang lu* 入藏錄) that form part of almost all Buddhist catalogues since early Sui times, see Ono Gemmyō 小野玄妙, *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten* 佛書解説大辭典, *bekkan* 別巻, Tokyo, 1936, 423ff.

times be most effective. All this takes place in an extremely narrow circle, both socially and geographically.

But that is not all, for if we return to the other "pillar", that of the Chinese exegesis and the Chinese scholastic systems, much the same picture arises. The subject is very complicated. Without going into details, it may be said that also in this sector we again find the combination of (i) a very small élite of highly educated monks; (ii) an important role played by imperial sponsorship; and (iii) a concentration of activities in a limited number of large, richly-endowed monasteries.[14]

We must conclude that very much of what we know about Chinese Buddhism, and especially about those sectors that always have been regarded as its very essence, actually only reflects an extremely small fragment of the whole. Biographical sources will hardly help us out, for they too show the same extreme limitation: the compilations containing the lives of "Eminent Monks" *gaoseng* 高僧 or "Illustrious Monks" *mingseng* 名僧 are, as their titles imply, almost totally devoted to the *faits et gestes* of the same clerical élite; they are largely meant to be works of religious propaganda, showing the respectability and high connections of the *saṅgha.* They, too, are mainly concerned with the tiny tip of a submerged iceberg.

How small the sample is becomes apparent if we turn to some known census figures. On the basis of such figures we can assume, at a very rough estimate, that China (north and south together) in the 6th century con-
[165] tained some 10,000 monasteries and temples, peopled with some 150,000 monks and nuns. The figures suggest a steady growth till CE 845, when the numbers had increased to 44,600 monasteries and 260,000 monks

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14 For our purpose it may suffice to point out that in the formative phase of the school-traditions (*zong* 宗) in Chinese Buddhism the leading masters all belonged to the clerical élite. Without exception they operated at the highest social level and enjoyed imperial patronage. This holds good for all the "founding fathers" and their most illustrious successor Jizang 吉藏 (549–623) and Falang 法朗 (507–581) of the Three Treatises (*sanlun* 三論) School; Zhiyi 智顗 (538–598), Guanding 灌頂 (561–632) and Zhanran 湛然 (711–782) of the Tiantai (天台) School; the Huayan (華嚴) "patriarchs" Zhiyan 智儼 (606–668), Fazang 法藏 (643–712) and Chengguan 澄觀 (737–838); Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) and Kuiji 窺基 (602–682) who established the Faxiang 法相) School; Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) of the Disciplinary (lü 律) School, and the Pure Land (*jingtu* 淨土) masters Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542), Daochuo 道綽 (562–645) and Shandao 善導 (d. 662, var. 681). In spite of its alleged "popular" or "anti-conventional" character, the earliest propagators of Chan Buddhism in its northern and southern variants, the masters Shenxiu 神秀 (600–706) and Shenhui 神會 (668–760), clearly belong to the same clerical élite. The social and political background of the school-traditions would deserve a detailed study, along the lines indicated by S. Weinstein in his important article "Imperial patronage in the formation of Tang Buddhism", in A. F. Wright and D. Twitchett (ed.), *Perspectives on the Tang*, New Haven, 1973, 265–306.

and nuns. Even if the average circulation period within the *saṅgha* is completely unknown, we must conclude that, even in the early medieval period alone, at least two million persons must have had clerical status. If we compare such numbers with our available biographical information the result is very sobering. Even if we include data from epigraphical sources and from secular literature, for the whole medieval period we may reach a total of some 1,500 members of the *saṅgha* about whom we have any information at all, which means that our sample consists of, at most, one-twentieth of one percent of the Chinese *saṅgha*. The same holds good for monastic institutions: most of our information concerns a limited number of prominent monasteries, a few dozens of privileged centres, bases of learning, monastic discipline and distinguished social contacts, that only formed an infinitesimal fraction of the about ten thousand monasteries that seem to be the minimum number to be reckoned with. In other words: our picture of Chinese Buddhism as a historical phenomenon is not merely unbalanced, it is distorted beyond all proportions, and the question arises whether we can do something about it; whether we can devise any ways to get at least some glimpses of that huge body that is hidden from our view. Chinese Buddhism as presented by our sources is representative of the Great Tradition within medieval Chinese Buddhism, and that Great Tradition, however impressive, was less than skin-deep. It was carried on by a very small, highly literate élite within the clergy; their theories and teachings represented Buddhism at its highest level of sophistication; they were very closely linked up with the worldly establishment, notably the imperial court; they worked in a very limited number of rich, often state-sponsored monasteries, very often at the capital. What about the vast body of innumerable little traditions—local manifestations of Buddhist life as it existed among the people, far removed from that world of texts, treatises, learned doctors, impressive rituals and rich endowments? What can we expect to find at those lower levels? Let me just start abruptly, with a few reports of remarkable happenings.

In CE 499, strange things started to happen in the household of a certain Jiang Bi 江泌, who served as a Scholar of Wide Learning at the present-day Nanjing. His eight-year old daughter fell into a trance-like state, during which scriptures were supernaturally transmitted to her. Details are given by a contemporary, the famous Vinaya master and bibliographer Sengyou 僧祐 (444–518): "At times she would sit down in meditation with closed eyes, and then she would recite those scriptures. In some cases she said that she had ascended to heaven, in other cases she claimed that (she received the texts) with the help of spirits. She spoke

very fluently, as if it had been an ingrained habit, and she let people write
[166] out (the texts). And then she would suddenly stop again".[15] In this way the girl recited 21 scriptures, the titles of which have been preserved,[16] between her 8th and 15th year of age. The young medium created quite a stir at the capital. She was even interrogated by the emperor, but then she behaved quite normally. Eventually she entered the female order as Sister Sengfa 僧法, and she died in Green Park Nunnery Qingyuan si 青園寺 in CE 505, the last year of her revelations, only 15 years old. The family wanted to hide the texts, but amateurs *haoshi zhe* 好事者 had already got hold of copies, and the girl's uncle also believed them to be genuine and had them collected and copied, and so these texts started circulating. Sengyou, who definitely did not like such things, has included them in his section on "doubtful and spurious" texts—but with some hesitation, for he mentions a historical precedent. In the early 3rd century, a certain Lady Ding 丁 of Jiying 濟陰 suddenly was seized by what looked like a disease. In that state she spoke barbarian language, and when she was given paper and brush, she wrote some foreign script. Finally a monk from the western regions identified her writing as a "separate (version of?) a scripture" *biejing* 別經.[17]

A parallel story is reported in the *Mingxiang ji* 冥祥記, a 6th-century collection of notes about strange happenings. It contains more supernatural elements, and may illustrate the way in which this theme of "spirit-writing" was reflected in popular imagination. Around the middle of the 4th century, when Ding Cheng 丁丞 was magistrate of Ningyin 寧陰, it was reported to him that a woman, after having met a foreigner "with long nose and deep-set eyes", had been seized by a mysterious disease. During the attack she talked in a strange tongue and wrote a text in horizontal, hook-like script. There also was a boy who could read it, and after that they would dance and sing. But when summoned and interrogated by the magistrate, the woman claimed that she had not known what she was

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[15] *CSZJJ*, T 2145 j. 5, p. 40b.

[16] *CSZJJ*, loc. cit., lists 21 titles of works totalling 35 *juan*. Some titles are identical with those of certain well-known Mahāyāna scriptures such as the *Lotus sūtra, Fahua jing* 法華經, the *Śrīmālā-devī-siṃhanāda-sūtra, Shengman jing* 勝鬘經, and the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa, Weimo jing* 維摩經. In most cases the titles do not correspond to any known authentic scriptures, but they clearly are patterned after Buddhist examples, making use of conventional Buddhist terms like "Pure Land" *jingtu* 淨土, *"Prajñā" banruo* 般若, *"Anāgāmin" a'na han* 阿那含, "Lion's Roar" *shizi hou* 獅子吼, etc.

[17] *CSZJJ*, T 2145, loc. cit.

doing. When shown to a foreign monk at the Monastery the writing was identified as the missing part of a Buddhist scripture.[18]

Neither Sengyou nor the *Mingxiang ji* explicitly suggest that in those cases of spirit-writing and *hierolalia*, evil powers are at work. But the connection with possession and exorcism is clearly made in a curious incident reported in the biography of the famous early 6th-century psalmodist Senglang 僧朗. For some time a completely uneducated nun had been possessed by a demon who enabled her to explain the most difficult *sūtras*; and she had a large following of admirers. Senglang, who realizes that she is possessed, goes to the lecture hall of the convent where the nun is preaching. He shouts: "Little slave! Since I have come, why don't you step down?" The nun breaks down *bengxia* 崩下; she leaves the hall and stands facing Senglang, completely immobilized, from early morning till well into the afternoon, silent, and wet with perspiration. The crisis lasts about a hundred days, after which she is cured.[19] Here the cure is undoubtedly exorcistic. A more rational approach to such pathologi-
[167] cal phenomena is found in another interesting case, this time situated in the North. According to the biography of the mid-6th-century monk Daofeng 道豐, who had a great reputation as an alchemist, physician, and soothsayer, a Chan monk at the Stone Cave Monastery (Shiku si 石窟寺) was visited by a luminous image, and by a nightly voice that told him that he was a Buddha. His whole behaviour changed: apart from "brutalizing" his fellow-monks, he shouted incoherently and his eyes had strange-coloured pupils. Daofeng interrogated him; concluded that he was dangerously insane, and successfully cured him by means of acupuncture—three needles sufficed.[20]

In these cases the phenomena led to investigation, and sometimes also to attempts to "cure" the medium; the attitude is one of suspicion mixed with amazement and apprehension. However, sometimes such practices could have far more serious consequences. In CE 510 there was an ascetic monk in Yinzhou 鄞州 (present-day Wuhan), named Miaoguang 妙光, who by deluding the crowd had recruited a following of *aficionadas* among nuns and old women who extolled his teachings as the Saintly Way *shengdao* 聖道. When about to be expelled from the Order, he fled to present-day Yangzhou where he started a curious movement, apparently

[18] *Mingxiang ji* by Wang Yan 王琰, quoted in *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林, T 2122, j. 18. p. 417a.

[19] *XGSZ*, T 2060 j. 25, pp. 650c–651a.

[20] Ibid., p. 649b–c.

together with his father, his younger brother, and his nephew, to whom he had given fancy Indian names. He preached an apocryphal text, no doubt pretending to have "received" it, entitled "The *Sūtra* of the Adornment of Sarvajñata and his Family" *saporuotuo juanshu zhuangyan jing* 薩婆若陀眷屬莊嚴經, and he soon was surrounded by a large crowd of devotees. The text itself apparently also functioned as a sacred object: written on a screen and covered with red silk gauze, it was venerated with offerings of incense and flowers. This heresiarch was assisted by a man called Lu Yan 路琰 who took care of the editing of the text. However, this heterodox movement was discovered by the authorities; Miaoguang and his aide were arrested, transported to the capital, and thrown into jail. The charge was "cunning tricks of deceit" *qiaozha* 巧詐, and the verdict submitted was death by decapitation for Miaoguang, and ten years' banishment to a frontier region for his accomplice. The emperor thereupon ordered an official investigation of the case by a committee of 20 prominent clerics who, after having interrogated the unfortunate Saint and having obtained his full confession, forthwith expelled him from the *saṅgha.* By a special act of imperial grace, Miaoguang's life was spared, but since it was feared that he would resume his "delusive and disturbing" (*huoluan* 惑亂) activities elsewhere if he were set free, he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment. More than 20 copies of his scripture, as well as the screen, were confiscated and burnt by official order. But, Sengyou sadly adds, other copies still are circulating, as a potential source of future disturbance.[21]

We have seen how in this strange world, so far removed from the Great Tradition of Chinese Buddhism, the text itself comes to play a supernatural role. It is transmitted in supernatural ways; "revealed"; miraculously
[168] written down; and, in the case of Miaoguang and his sect, the text itself, the physical object, is venerated as a divine thing. It is a theme that is found several times in Chinese Buddhist apocrypha, e.g. in the spurious "Consecration Scripture", *Guanding jing* 灌頂經, a probably 5th century collection of exorcistic texts and spells that forms a veritable panorama of early Chinese popular demonology.[22] According to its introductory section, 600 years after the *Parinirvāṇa*, when the world will be steeped in sin, there will be a pious monk named Puji 普濟 who practices *dhyāna* in various mountain caves. On one of his peregrinations he will discover a beautiful grotto, and there he will find a precious box containing a copy

[21] *CSZJJ*, T 2145, j. 5, p. 40b–c.
[22] T 1331, wrongly attributed to the 4th-century *dhāraṇī*-specialist Śrīmitra.

of this scripture, written with gold script on finely carved slips of sandalwood. He will adore this divine text and propagate it again in the world, that all may be saved.[23] It will be a potent weapon against all evil powers and dangers. The text itself will act as a protective charm, even for those who cannot read: they should carry it in a silk pouch on the chest or at the girdle, and all evil spirits will be powerless.[24] However, much resistance is to be expected, for many traditionalist monks will reject it as spurious and heretical, with terrible karmic consequences to themselves.

The study of early Chinese Buddhist apocryphal literature constitutes a vast and intriguing field of research, the exploration of which has barely begun. Apocryphal texts are Buddhist works produced in China by (obviously anonymous) Chinese; they pretend to be "translations" of non-Chinese texts, and, being such, to be part of the authentic Buddhist tradition. They generally are short texts, written in a primitive and rather incoherent language, with little doctrinal sophistication, and full of references to ideas and beliefs that are not of Buddhist origin but are part and parcel of the Chinese indigenous tradition such as the Confucian standard virtues; or *yin* 陰, *yang* 陽 and the Five Elements; and, indeed, they not seldom specifically refer to China itself. In some cases such works somehow have found their way into the Buddhist Canon itself, perhaps because they were not recognized as fakes, or, if they were, they may have been regarded as harmless. But in many other cases, these works were considered heretical, unorthodox, morally subversive, or even politically dangerous, and such works had to be suppressed.[25] Miaoguang's sacred text on the screen looks like such a heretical scripture, around which a sectarian movement could grow up, and we have seen how the clerical and the temporal establishment joined hands to suppress it. Buddhist bibliographers, by way of warning example, have listed the titles of hundreds of such proscribed, false scriptures—but in most cases that is all that is left of them.

It should, therefore, be stressed that the Buddhist Canon is the final product of many centuries of clerical censorship. There has been a constant process of expurgation (or even wholesale destruction) of such "heretical" texts. In this respect the Dunhuang manuscripts are invaluable: they constitute an uncensored body of materials, containing many

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[23] T 1331 j. 1, pp. 497c–498a.
[24] Ibid., p. 501b.
[25] The best general survey of Chinese Buddhist apocryphal literature is to be found in the introductory part of Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮, *Gikyō kenkyū* 疑經研究, Kyōto, 1977, 1–95.

[169] dozens of Buddhist apocrypha, and they allow us to get an impression of the popularity and wide distribution of such texts that were excluded from the official canon.

Let us then return to the complex of beliefs and practices that I have illustrated with some examples—the complex of "inspiration, spirit-writing, possession, and the revelation of sacred texts". It is clear that this complex lies outside the Great Tradition of Chinese Buddhism. The representatives of that Tradition—the prominent translators and their Chinese assistants, the learned exegetes and scholastic experts—definitely do not engage in this kind of practice, and ecclesiastical historians only rarely touch upon them. Prominent clerics may have visions of divine beings, but those do not lead to the production of sacred texts. The translation of scriptures—one of the central elements in the Great Tradition—is of course a highly meritorious work that benefits all those who take part in it, as well as its sponsors, but it is described in rather down-to-earth terms. Chinese versions are "produced" (*chu* 出); they are in no way supernaturally revealed, or found in mountain caves. Because phenomena like these are so marginal to the sphere of interest of the clerical élite, and, consequently, are so rarely mentioned, we might easily dismiss them as a kind of freakish anomaly; and, indeed, as long as we view Chinese Buddhism in the perspective of the Great Tradition, they would seem to be of minimal importance.

Their real significance is only revealed if we place them in the wider context of indigenous Chinese religion. We then see that they are by no means haphazard aberrations; they fit into a pattern of beliefs and practices that is familiar to any student of Chinese religion: trance and ecstasy; possession combined with dancing and singing; "spirit-writing" either in Chinese or in some incomprehensible script; the text as a supernatural object, revealed to adepts or found in inaccessible places; the remarkable role of women. In other words, the phenomena described here exactly fit into the general pattern of early medieval Chinese religious lore; within that lore, they form part of a well-defined cluster of beliefs. Instead of dismissing them as atypical and exceptional, I believe we should rather single them out and pay special attention to them, as very valuable glimpses we get of deeper layers of Chinese Buddhism—those deeper levels at which Chinese Buddhism merged with indigenous popular religion, and to which our clerical authors only rarely descend.

Once we read our sources in this perspective, it is possible to define other complexes of this type, that may serve as other shafts sunk, as it were, into the body of the iceberg that is submerged and hidden from our

view. I may, first of all, mention a complex of ideas and beliefs that loomed large in Chinese apocryphal literature: the eschatological-messianic complex, i.e. the belief that this sinful world will perish in the foreseeable future; that the end will come with cosmic disasters and apocalyptic war; that a messiah will come to save the virtuous minority, and that thereaf-
[170] ter there will be a perfect world of everlasting happiness. Since this is a subject that I am treating in greater detail elsewhere, I shall here confine myself to a few remarks.[26]

In the first place, we know that the belief that the world is about to enter (or, in fact, already has entered) its last phase of degeneration—that of the *mofa* 末法 or final disappearance of the Doctrine—was very much alive in Chinese Buddhist circles at that time; especially in the 6th century such expectations were rampant. It is also clear that the whole complex, at least in its most radical form, again lies outside the sphere of the Great Tradition and was even opposed to it. This type of eschatology was based on the conviction that the *saṅgha* itself and the worldly government had degenerated beyond repair; and that the Saviour was soon to appear, ready for the big clean-up. Needless to say that neither the clerical nor the temporal establishment could appreciate such ideas, to say the least. They only could accept the *mofa* conception in its most mitigated, harmless forms; its more radical popular expressions were condemned as heretical and subversive, and successfully suppressed.

And here, again, we see that this complex exactly fits into a pattern found in indigenous Chinese religious lore. A number of elements are borrowed from Mahāyāna beliefs, such as the cyclical destruction of the universe at the end of a cosmic era; the notion of a succession of future Buddhas of whom Maitreya is the first one to come; the saving power of Bodhisattvas, etcetera. However, it was Daoist messianism and eschatology, as found in a whole range of Daoist prophetic scriptures, that provided the model, the grid, that was filled out with Buddhist materials. In the prophetic Buddhist apocryphal texts of this type (parts of which have survived among the Dunhuang manuscripts), there is a complete merger of Buddhist and Daoist ideas, and in view of what we found in the case of our first complex that is precisely what we should expect at a popular level.

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[26] For a more detailed treatment of the subject cf. my article "Prince Moonlight—messianism and eschatology in early medieval Chinese Buddhism" in the forthcoming *T'oung Pao*, and, for a shorter outline, "Eschatology and messianism in early Chinese Buddhism", in *Leyden Studies in Sinology,* Leiden, 1981, 34–56.

A third complex that could lead us to the deeper layers of Chinese Buddhism is of a more general nature. It has to do with the way the people viewed the Buddhist priest as a source of spiritual power. I would define it as the complex of "charisma, purification, and hidden saintliness". Let me again start with some typical examples, which at first sight seem incoherent, marginal, or even bizarre.

(1) The 5th century itinerant monk Beidu 杯渡 carries a raft with him wherever he goes; he also carried a huge basket full of mysterious things. He is reported to have strange powers: he can walk at an incredible speed; he revives dead animals and transforms white stones into buffaloes, and he cures diseases with miraculous means. In addition, he breaks all the rules of normal monastic life.[27]

(2) Another popular itinerant monk, Baozhi 寶誌, waives the rules completely, drinking wine, wearing long hair, and behaving unconventionally in every way. He also carries things about: in his case a monk's staff, to which are attached a mirror, a razor, and strips of silk. He speaks
[171] in oracular language, in prose as well as in verse. It is said that he once showed his "real form" *zhenxing* 眞形, complete with halo.[28]

(3) The 4th-century hermit Zhu Tanyou 竺曇猷 renders wild animals tame and friendly by his presence;[29] the same is said of many other monks; in other cases the animals disappear when the monk settles somewhere, as do other evil powers.[30] The exorcist Senglang has no fixed abode, nor even any fixed itinerary. He always walks behind his dog and his monkey; the monkey riding on the dog's back and Senglang following them wherever they choose to go, like a bizarre Chinese counterpart of the immortial trio from Hector Malot's *Sans famille*.[31]

Examples could be multiplied, and other themes could be added, but this may suffice.

Needless to say that here I am not concerned with the question of historical accuracy. I am concerned with beliefs and images, with a certain *conception of sanctity.* In hagiography we find such a conception of sanctity, as it were, in concentrated and exaggerated form. But as is always the case in hagiography, we may expect that such ideas, brought down to human proportions, played a role in defining the attitude of the people

27 *GSZ*, T 2059 j. 10, pp. 390b–393b.
28 Ibid., p. 394c–395a.
29 Ibid., j. 11, p. 385b.
30 For some other early examples, cf. my *Buddhist Conquest of China*, 145–6.
31 *XGSZ*, T 2060, j. 25, p. 650c.

towards the Buddhist monk as a person charged with a special kind of charismatic power.

In order to recognize the structure underlying this whole mass of seemingly out-of-the-way and marginal beliefs, and to see their real significance, we again have to turn to the Chinese indigenous religious tradition where this complex is by no means marginal, but rather forms the heart of the matter.

If we try to analyse the seemingly incoherent mass of Chinese Buddhist hagiography and to define the basic concept underlying those stories, this appears to be *hua* 化: "transforming power", "transforming influence". In its widest sense, "transformation" refers to the processes of Nature, conceived as regular and continuous change, operated by Heaven and Earth through the various agencies of *yin* and *yang* and the Five Elements. The Confucian Sage, at a rational level, has a profound insight into these processes and their consequences, and therefore he knows the ups and downs of Destiny. However, in the religious world-view the approach is different. Transformation is everywhere, and may take the most surprising forms: animals changing into each other; human-like beings that actually are the "essence" (*jing* 精) of objects such as stones, trees, or stars; women that actually are foxes and foxes that actually are women, and who change their forms at will. In this world-view, and particularly in the tradition of religious Daoism, the Saint is one who by the power of his spiritual and bodily exercises has identified himself with Nature to such an extent that he is able to manipulate the forces of transformation. In the first place this affects himself: he "purifies" his mortal body, in order eventually to transform it into the ethereal shape of an Immortal. But he will also transform his surroundings by his beneficial influence: those who associate with
[172] him will be magically protected; wild animals will be tamed; he purifies the world by his mere presence. However, just like the forces of Nature that do their work silently and without any publicity, his saintliness generally is hidden; the world at large does not recognize him, and it should not. Some connoisseurs may recognize him by the supernatural stigmata of his body, or by his use of some symbolic object, or by understanding the deeper meaning of his oracular statements. But he does not show his eminence—on the contrary. He may be a wineseller on the market-place, or a tramp, or even a sinner, and both his outward form and his behaviour may be crude or even grotesque. He can perform miracles: move as fast as the wind, multiply his body, evoke wind and rain, etcetera, but this is not regarded as "forcing" Nature in any way. On the contrary, such "transformations" are the result of his complete unison with Nature, by which he

can evoke "responses" (*ying* 應, another key-term), and, preferably, "auspicious responses" (*ruiying* 瑞應): the appearance of lucky things such as auspicious animals, divine objects, and timely rain.

Here we see again how all those stray elements that we find dispersed throughout our texts fall into a coherent pattern once we place them in the context of traditional Chinese beliefs. In this case I think that we even can go further. As I said before, hagiography is not just fantasy; it does not come out of a cultural void. It is the hyperbolic expression of existing ideals and attitudes. Since we again are dealing with a complex that, by and large, lies outside the main stream of the Great Tradition, and that takes us down to more popular levels, would it not be possible to discern, behind the veil of pious fantasy, the contours of popular attitudes towards the "saintly man" on a human scale? The basic elements obviously are spiritual power, coupled with the knowledge of certain techniques, magical purification and protection, and a charisma that does not depend on outward things like learning and disciplinary behaviour, and that even may be hidden under the most boorish or freakish appearance. Translated into terms of everyday life this would be something like regarding the monk primarily as somebody who is endowed with a special kind of power. He does not need to be a Master of the Law, or even a strict disciplinarian. By performing his rituals, or even by his mere presence, he will exert a purifying, transforming influence upon his surroundings, and be a source of "good luck" to the community. Even if we have no direct evidence, I believe that this is as near as we can come to the image of the priest as it lived among the millions of simple believers, who were served by those hundreds of thousands of low-level monks, most of whom no doubt were hardly literate, or even hardly ordained in a regular way.

I could mention other complexes that appear to afford us some more glimpses of what the bulk of Chinese Buddhism must have been like, but I would rather pass on to another extremely valuable source of information that has hardly been tapped yet. It is to be found in the scriptural
[173] literature of the closest companion and greatest rival of Chinese Buddhism throughout the whole medieval period: the tradition of religious Daoism. From the late 4th century onward, Daoism absorbed elements from Mahāyāna Buddhism on an ever-increasing scale. Its terminology became permeated with Buddhist expressions, and Daoist scriptures more and more adopted the style of Buddhist *sūtras*. However, much more was borrowed than terminological and stylistic features. Whole clusters of Buddhist ideas were absorbed into religious Daoism, such as fundamental notions concerning time and space; the basic rules of morality, coupled

with the Mahāyāna ideals of universal compassion and the transfer of merit; the concept of strictly individual guilt, and, most important, the whole complex of *karman*, rebirth, and retribution. When I, some time ago, made an analysis of such Buddhist loans in early medieval Daoist scriptures,[32] I was struck by the importance of such texts for the study of Chinese Buddhism itself, at a level clearly below that of the Great Tradition. The choice of elements borrowed, their content and frequency, can give us an impression of what ideas in Chinese Buddhism were most alive in those circles where Buddhists and Daoists met—i.e. mainly at the level of lay believers; what ideas were, in fact, so forceful that they became part of the rival tradition, there to live on and to further develop in a Daoist context. In a way, we could say that besides flowing on in its own river-bed, Chinese Buddhism developed a parallel channel of propagation through Daoism. I am convinced that we still have much to learn about early Chinese Buddhism by further developing the very promising field of comparative Buddha-Daoist studies.

I realize that the perspective which I have presented leaves many questions unanswered, and that it only represents one kind of approach. It is an attempt to get away from the view that early Chinese Buddhism is a more or less homogeneous whole, presented to us by the thousands of texts that we have at our disposal, and to replace that view by a more critical approach stressing the stratified nature of Chinese Buddhism, and the fact that we know too much about too little. Secondly, it attempts to get away from the tendency to overstress the identity of Chinese Buddhism as a clear-cut, independent tradition different from other types of Chinese religion. Here again, I believe that we are led astray by the fact that our materials are focused upon the very top, the products of the clerical élite, the level at which Buddhism was most articulate, and its unique identity as a system of religion and philosophy was most clearly expressed. It can be demonstrated that, as soon as we go below that top level, quite another picture emerges, in which Buddhism loses much of its sharp contour, as it is absorbed into the surrounding mass of Chinese indigenous religion. Thirdly, it is an attempt to redress the balance, not by underestimating the value of the study of the Great Tradition (for it evidently contains the most admirable products of Chinese Buddhism), but by developing, in addition, ways and means to penetrate further down—to sink shafts into

[32] "Buddhist influence on early Daoism: a survey of scriptural evidence", *T'oung Pao*, LXVI, 1980, 84–147.

[174] the hidden body of the iceberg. I have indicated two channels of information: (i) the study of those elements that appear to be out-of-the-way and aberrant, but that, once placed in the context of Chinese religion at large, appear to be part of well-known indigenous complexes of ideas, and (ii) the study of popular Buddhism as reflected in Daoism.

I admit that this approach does not make matters easier, on the contrary: it requires more work, a considerable broadening of the field to be covered, and it undermines the clear-cut image of Chinese Buddhism—the outlines become blurred, and sometimes even fade away altogether. In addition to the usual philological ones, other critical questions have to be posed for each individual text: "at what level was it produced; by what kind of people; under what kind of sponsorship; for what kind of public?" In this perspective, the study of Chinese Buddhism will no doubt become more complicated, and less clearly defined, less tangible. But that may also mean that we are getting somewhat nearer to historical truth, and to life itself. And in that case we shall certainly be acting in the spirit of the great man whose memory we honour to-day.

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MAHĀ-CĪNA: THE BUDDHIST REINTERPRETATION OF THE HISTORY OF CHINA

With the fundamental principles of the Buddhist doctrine of salvation Chinese Buddhists inherited an entire set of complex notions of Indian origin, ranging from logic and cosmology to demonology and iconographic traditions, many of which were not only different, but even fundamentally opposed to the beliefs and practices of the Chinese elite. The study of Chinese Buddhism for a large part concerns the history of the ways in which adherents in China endeavoured to appropriate the foreign tradition by assimilating certain elements of the Indian Buddhist heritage to more or less similar traits of the Chinese cultural tradition; it seeks to show how Buddhists managed to render Buddhism meaningful in the Chinese context, to the extent that China was able to, so to speak, recognize itself in it. One of the means they resorted to was the manipulation of texts that spoke of China, or that might seem to be speak of it. In these texts or these textual passages, China is generally called Cīna or "Great China", Mahā-Cīna, and it is these same terms that certain Chinese Buddhist authors regularly used in their writings to designate their own country. This fact by itself shows that Buddhism held the position of a subculture in China. Chinese Buddhists were compelled by their religious convictions to consider China no longer as the centre of the civilized world, but as Mahā-Cīna, a kingdom situated at the eastern periphery of the Buddhist world. Hence the term Mahā-Cīna which I have adopted as the title for this talk: it suggests the contradictory necessity that the adherents of a foreign doctrine felt of renouncing neither their faith nor their belonging to China. My aim is to show how Chinese Buddhists have tried to resolve this contradiction in two related domains: that of history and that of the conception of universal sovereignty.

[478] According to traditional conceptions in China, history is essentially a history of civilization. It neither begins with the creation of the human race nor with that of our universe. After an indefinite period of primitive and therefore unrecorded life, history begins with the appearance of civilizing heroes: it is a succession of godlike sovereigns who introduced the fundamental elements of civilization (agriculture, sericulture, housing, means of transport, writing…) as well as the hierarchical distinctions

between sovereign and subjects, the rules of moral conduct, and the correct ritual attitudes. In the entire subsequent history, the ideal monarch who governs by virtue of the Mandate of Heaven remains a constant model of reference: history serves to show how sovereigns and the reigning houses succeeded or failed in fulfilling their foremost duty, which is to make human order (*zhi*) and civilized life (*wen*) prevail in society and in the empire. Its pretentions are thus relatively modest in terms of time and space: it begins around the 3rd millenium BCE and it is China and its borders that form its scene.

The Chinese conception of history is not cyclical. It recognizes an evolution that goes from the primitive to the complex in all domains of material civilization, political organization and culture. But this is not its fundamental preoccupation. Its principal theme bears on the manner in which successive sovereigns knew how to maintain social harmony and political order, and thus it is rather characterized by a pendulum's swing: since the decline of the ideal order that was present in the ancient past, some sovereigns were better than others in living up to their task. There have thus been periods of order, prosperity and political unity, but they were separated by long intervals of decline and disorder, in the course of which it even happened that the Chinese world was amputated by conquering barbarians or that dynasties that were held to be legitimate were not able to maintain the unity of China. This linear and oscillatory conception of history also entails that it has no conclusion: according to the orthodox view, eschatology, millenarian expectations or the physical destruction of the universe do not have a place in history.

Lastly, Chinese orthodox historians have never tried to integrate human history—or rather the few millenia of civilized life they are concerned with—into the much larger context of cosmology and cosmic periods. The latter, however, were not unknown to them: well before the appearance of Buddhism, Chinese astronomers carried out calculations that bore on millions of years. Heaven, as the impersonal principle of order and, more
[479] concretely, as the movement of celestial bodies plays an important role in history: the legitimate emperor reigns by virtue of the Mandate that Heaven has conferred to him and abnormal phenomena are the signs by which Heaven is supposed to respond to nefarious events that take place in the world of men, and particularly to the conduct of the sovereign and his entourage. But the cosmogonic and cosmological theories as well as the astronomical calculations that bear on very long periods do not play any role in history and do not have any connection with the conception of the Mandate of Heaven, nor with the political theology that is based

on this conception. The Chinese also do not make history go back to a first act of creation. The formation of the universe is always described in mechanical and impersonal terms: it is a process of polarization (*yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽) and progressive diversification (five elements) starting from the state of original chaos, with no connection to the destiny of man.

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On all these essential points, the Buddhist perspective is opposed to this traditional Chinese viewpoint. It provides a perfect example of cyclical thought: time consists of an infinite succession of cosmic eras or *kalpa*s of existence, of inconceivable duration, separated by eras of annihilation during which all existence has disappeared. From the Buddhist point of view, cosmology is directly related to the destiny of man and all other beings: the very birth of our physical universe is due to collective *karman*, that is to say, the sum total of non-retributed actions of all beings, inherited from previous *kalpa*s of existence. At the end of an era of annihilation, this collective *karman* is re-activated; it brings about a breeze that blows through the empty space. This breeze grows to become a wind and then a cosmic cyclone—this is the "circle of wind" that forms the basis on which the universe is constituted: the layers of the waters and the earth, the four continents around the mountain Sumeru, the numerous levels of heavens above its summit and, below its base, the hells. Each era of existence displays the same historical (or rather, unhistorical) scheme, in a recurring movement, going through cycles of prosperity and decadence at two levels. On the spiritual level, the periods of greatest happiness are marked by the appearance of a buddha who realizes the supreme Truth and reveals the doctrine of liberation from all suffering through the destruction of desire. But the doctrine, in its original purity, does not last longer than a limited period of time. It degenerates in two stages: the phase of *xiangfa* 像法 or "semblance doctrine", during which a semblance
[480] of the message is preserved, and the final phase during which the world sinks into ignorance, corruption and sin. On the secular level, there is a similar cycle: now and then the world is blessed with the appearance of a universal monarch "Who makes the wheel [of the Law] turn" (*cakravartin*), who, by force of his positive *karman*, is able to extend his power to our southern continent of Jambudvīpa in its entirety, or even to all four continents. The *cakravartin* is the model for the pious sovereign who rules through peaceful means, encourages the propagation of Buddhism, and generously ensures the prosperity of the clergy. But after this golden age, the decline sets in just as in the spiritual domain: the empire dis-

integrates; wars, robbery, oppression and natural catastrophies follow. However, when the lowest point is reached, the movement upward starts again. Another buddha appears at an opportune time to preach the doctrine, and other *cakravartin*s arise who, after having unified the world, ensure the happiness and conversion of men.

All this constitutes the immense stage on which history in the Buddhist sense of the term is played out; immense in time, for it is not limited to the present aeon, but extends to the thousands and millions of *kalpa*s that have already passed, in the course of which all beings have acquired reserves of non-retributed *karman*, which in turn determine their present conduct and destiny; immense in space, as it only covers our own cosmic system, but at times extends its ramifications to innumerable other worlds with which the Indian imagination filled the universe. According to this conception, all things, ever since the formation of the world until the vicissitudes of human history—birth and decline of kingdoms, prosperity and misery, order and disorder—are inextricably bound up with the central message of Buddhism: *karman*, retribution and deliverance. When historical figures—in the meaning that we give to this term—appear, their role is expressed in religious terms. The most famous example is that of the Maurya emperor Aśoka. For the Buddhist tradition, his life is entirely dominated by one single theme: his role as the supreme patron of Buddhism. In fact, Aśoka became the last true cakravartin in Buddhist history who, thanks to his positive karman, was able to once again extend his empire to the entire continent of Jambudvīpa.

In short, the Buddhist conception of history is built on the theme of salvation. Buddhist history is a *Heilsgeschichte*, as the Germans would say. History means existence changing in time—and according to the Buddhist view, all change involves alteration, decline and suffering. Now,
[481] Buddhism aims precisely at liberation from this state of impermanence, such that one can say that in a sense Buddhism rejects history. In relation to this overriding preoccupation, the major themes of the Chinese view of history—the creation and evolution of civilization, the reign of virtue, the endless efforts to realize or recreate the social and political order in the world—are simply marginal. There are few domains where the two traditions are this diametrically opposed. The formidable task therefore fell to Chinese Buddhists to bridge the gap and weave the Buddhist *Heilsgeschichte* into the texture of Chinese history.

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The process took several centuries. We can observe the first signs in the 4th century CE, when Chinese and "barbarian" dynasties co-existed on Chinese territory and Chinese Buddhism was still in its formative phase. At this time, an intellectual avant-garde of scholar-monks had already come forth from the Buddhist clergy, whose sphere of action was within the aristocracy and at the court, both in the Chinese South as in the northern non-Chinese states, bringing about conversions amongst the elite and defending their faith (and of course their ecclesiastical privileges) against the criticism of conservative Confucians and Daoist masters. The Buddhist community—and especially the clergy that constituted its core—had become a pressure group under attack and defending its own interests. Many of its activities, including its efforts to reinterpret China's past, should be considered in this context. It had to justify its existence in China through precedents. Consequently, from the 4th century onwards, the defenders of Buddhism resorted to an increasingly extensive arsenal of arguments. They argued:

1) that Buddhism (or rather the intervention of Buddhist saints or supernatural beings) had played a decisive role in the formation of Chinese civilization since the very beginning of history;
2) that, in the remote past, China had been part of a Buddhist empire;
3) that, until the most recent times, China and its sovereigns had been subject to a kind of Buddhist providence, guided by a mysterious force that manifests its power (and "responses", *ying* 應) through signs and apparitions;
4) that underneath the superficial outline of Chinese history as it was conceived by the tradition hid a more profound reality, namely, the long cycle comprised by the "three phases of the doctrine"—and that, [482] behind the successive dynasties and the changes of the Mandate of Heaven, there was an inexorable process of decline leading to the final stage of the Law (*mofa* 末法), the stage that will only reach its conclusion in the distant future with the advent of the future Buddha Maitreya.

From the beginning of the 4th century onwards, certain Chinese Buddhists endeavoured to link the Confucian ideal of the universal sovereign with the Buddhist image of the *cakravartin* or even with that of the Buddha as saviour. Sometimes, they made sovereigns who had been won to Buddhism understand that they were potential *cakravartin*s.

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In the making of a Buddhist version of the history of China, various methods were put to use, either out of good faith or with a deliberate intention to mystify. Amongst these methods, one can distinguish:

a) the manipulation of Buddhist texts. In some cases, passages of authentic texts, translated from Indian originals, were interpreted or forcefully appealed to when they alluded or seemed to allude to China. But, in their zeal, the defenders of the Buddhist faith neither hesitated to insert interpolations into translations of Indian originals nor even to fabricate apocrypha (*sūtra*s that are supposed to have been revealed and prophetic texts that constitute a genre characteristic of Buddhist literature in Chinese);
b) the interpretation of Chinese literature. During the centuries, advocates of Buddhism succeeded in culling from the classical, philosophical and historical literature of China an impressive number of passages that, with some imagination, could be taken as allusions to Buddhism. Abnormal phenomena mentioned by historians could be connected with events such as the birth and death of the Buddha. Buddhist themes could be deciphered in the symbols of the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) and in the cryptic explanations that are connected with them. One could also give a Buddhist colouring to traditions that concerned figures of the past, such as the account of the travels of king Mu of the Zhou dynasty to the Western regions in the 10th century BCE;
c) these written accounts were sometimes reinforced by revelations from supernatural beings, a practice entirely common in religious Daoism in which "automatic scripture" and sessions of spiritism were frequently resorted to. The Buddhist variant goes back at least to the 4th century. Its most curious product is a certain *Record of Miraculous Responses*
[483] [*from spirits*] (*Gantong lu* 感通錄), compiled in 664 by the celebrated Vinaya-master Daoxuan 道宣. In this tract, Daoxuan gives us a detailed account of his conversations with a whole series of Chinese historical figures who appeared to him and informed him very accurately about the lives of Buddhist saints and pious monarchs who had lived in China in remote times;
d) but what proof can be more convincing than tangible objects dating back to Chinese antiquity? One of the spirits who honoured Daoxuan with a visit went as far as revealing to him that certain sites in China held visible traces of the presence of a buddha of very ancient times,

Kāśyapa—which, according to a moderate estimation, would add a few million years to the history of Buddhism in China. But the claims were generally more modest and were related to the reign of Aśoka who, as we have seen, had been the last *cakravartin* of the Buddhist tradition and who, consequently, was supposed to have extended his empire to the whole of Jambudvīpa. As this southern continent also comprised China, it was logical to assume that in this country traces of this golden age of Buddhism are to be found: according to a well-attested Indian tradition, Aśoka had divided the relics of the Buddha into 84,000 pieces which he then had distributed to the whole of his kingdom, enclosed in reliquaries or little *stūpa*s. For the Chinese, being of inquisitive nature and concretely oriented, this tradition stood at the basis of a curious kind of archaeological excavations that had very satisfactory results. As it is enough to dig the soil anywhere in China to have a good chance to find some ancient object, there is no reason to suspect that each discovery was a falsification, even though the surfacing of certain objects bearing the inscription, with disarming naïveté, "made by Aśoka" cannot fail to raise our suspicions;

e) finally, mention is to be made of the importance accorded to the calculations of the chronology regarding the "three stages of the doctrine", the stages to which I have referred above. These theories are based on the date of the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddha and on the relative time span of the three phases: that of the "correct doctrine", of the "semblance doctrine", and of the "end of the doctrine". The calculations vary between three times 500 years and three times 1000 years, with different intermediary combinations between 500 and 1000 years. Furthermore, the date of the Buddha's death that served as the point of departure for these calculations was itself a controversial issue. For the date of *nirvāṇa*, a source from the end of the 6th century offers us six options, from 1093 to 467 BCE, with the author himself expressing his preference for the date of 609 and a periodization according to which
[484] the world has already entered, at the time of his writing, the phase of the "semblance doctrine", while still being far from the disasters of the final period, that of *mofa*. He gives clear reasons for his choice: in his time, under the glorious dynasty of the Sui and under the reign of an emperor-saint, the Buddhist faith is flourishing, while prosperity is universal. How could such a state of affairs be compatible with that of *mofa* in which the world undergoes the evils of a tyrannical government, corruption and the degeneration of moral conduct? Such is indeed the position that one finds in the works of the great tradition

of Chinese Buddhism, that of the ecclesiastical elite. For this elite, the question is far from being an academic one.

In fact, from the 6th century onwards, millenarian sects proclaimed the opposite position, which, by the established order, clerical as well as secular, was stigmatized as heretical and subversive: the oppression and corruption prevailing in the government and in society prove that the dark times of the Final Period have already come and that all that remains is to pray and repent while waiting for the arrival of Maitreya. The established church naturally did not see any reason to share this opinion, and it repeated its reassuring message every now and then: we are still in the relatively flourishing phase of "the semblance doctrine" and the final period is fortunately still far away.

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All these methods thus led to the formation of a "Buddhist history of China". This history is based on a certain number of essential themes that we find repeated and systematized in Buddhist writings since the Sui period, around 600 CE. I will try to summarize them in chronological order from prehistoric times until the end of the medieval period.

a) Traditional Chinese historians are accused of being narrow-minded, for their perspective only covers a few thousand years, just as the traditional Chinese geography is limited to a tiny part of the universe. This conception has to be replaced by the Buddhist view of time, according to which the history of mankind goes back to the beginnings of our cosmic era and one should think in millions of years just as our astronomers do. A Buddhist author in fact tells us that, since the advent of the first celestial sovereign until that of Emperor Daizong 代宗 of the Tang dynasty in 626 CE, 10,122,127 years have passed. If Chinese history does not have any records regarding these very remote times,
[485] this is not a reason to reject the Buddhist tradition, for it alone has preserved the memory of the earliest times.
b) As for the traditional conception in China of the origins of civilization, attributed to sovereign-saints and to civilizing heroes like Fu Xi 伏羲, Nü Wa 女媧 and the Yellow Emperor (*huangdi* 黃帝), it also shows great narrow-mindedness. These figures were actually powerful bodhisattvas or "beings of Awakening", who manifested themselves at the dawn of historical times to establish the foundations of civilized life, political order and morality. Even though the moment had not

yet arrived for the complete revelation of the doctrine, they furthered general well-being and raised the spirit of the people. China is thus indebted to Buddhism for the very principles of its civilization.

c) Supernatural influences continued to exert themselves on China from outside: the birth of the Buddha as well as his *nirvāṇa* were accompanied by miraculous signs that have been observed at the court of the Shang 商 dynasty or at the beginning of the Zhou 周 dynasty and have been interpreted by inspired astrologers: "A great man," it was written, "is born in the western regions and in a thousand years his doctrine will reach our country".

d) However, the influences that have exerted themselves on China from outside were even more important at the time of the great king Mu of the Zhou dynasty 周穆王 (1001–946 BCE). Buddhist sources offer us a portrayal of royal piety, confirmed by miraculous events, in which one recognizes all the old themes of the mythology that was formed, mostly in Daoist milieux, around the person of this king. He is represented as a true Buddhist monarch, converted by the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and by the disciple of the Buddha, Maudgalyāyana, who had specifically come to China for this purpose. King Mu established temples, terraces and *stūpa*s and then, at the end of his life, went to India in search of the Buddha, never to return. This is an interesting transposition of the legendary theme of the journey of king Mu to Central Asia, in which his visit to the Daoist deity of the "Queen-mother of the West" is transformed into a Buddhist pilgrimage!

e) But the great Buddhist era of the Chinese ancient past came several centuries later, when the great emperor Aśoka ruled over the entire continent of Jambudvīpa and distributed 84,000 *stūpa*s containing the relics of the Buddha. According to an apocryphal text, the "Esoteric account of the origin of the doctrine at the time of the Han dynasty", nineteen of these *stūpa*s had been erected in China: the discovery of some of them furnished tangible proof of the florescence of Buddhism in ancient China.

[486] f) It is therefore not surprising that Confucius himself at the beginning of the 5th century BCE had realized the superiority of Buddhism, as appears from some of his remarks, provided they are interpreted correctly. Nevertheless, as the moral customs of his time were in decline, and society was threatened by chaos, he preferred not to touch upon the most elevated subjects and contented himself with preaching a down-to-earth doctrine that only dealt with profane matters. But another interpretation goes much further: Confucius himself, as also

his master and adversary Laozi, the founder of Daoism, were in fact manifestations of bodhisattvas or saintly disciples of the Buddha, who preached a simplified doctrine in China in order to redress the evils of the time. This theory, in a certain way, is a continuation of the theme of the civilizing Buddhist heroes of most remote times: there, bodhisattvas were supposed to have created the very basis of Chinese civilization at the dawn of history; here, the foundation of the two principal currents of Chinese philosophical thought is attributed to Buddhist saints.

g) But if the Buddhist past of China has been this glorious, why is it that not a single text has survived? The reply is simple and ingenious: the guilty one is the black sheep of traditional historiography, Shi Huangdi 始皇帝 of the Qin 秦 dynasty, the founding tyrant of Chinese unity and the first emperor of China in 221 BCE. For the Buddhist tradition, the First Emperor was as much an enemy of Buddhism as of Confucianism and other philosophical currents (the "Hundred Schools"). A group of Buddhist preachers had indeed come from India to convert him, but he had had them thrown into prison, from which they came to be rescued by a supernatural being. In 213 BCE, the First Emperor ordered a vast destruction of books—a famous episode in the history of China—and it was then that all the Buddhist scriptures disappeared.

h) But the interruption was not to last for long. It ended with the official introduction of Buddhism, as it has been recorded by history, at the Chinese court around 65 CE, under the reign of the emperor Ming of the Later Han dynasty. Here we again encounter the theme of supernatural influence (*ganying* 感應), exerted by apparitions or signs of remote origin, a constant feature of the Buddhist *Heilsgeschichte* in China. Emperor Ming is struck by a dream in which "a golden man" appears to him; one of his courtiers, undoubtedly inspired, tells him that his dream is related to Buddhism and advises him to send a mission to the West. It returns a few years later with a large number of sacred texts, and in company of two Buddhist missionaries. This simple theme received great elaboration in the apocryphical literature. The reception of the mission at the court had been triumphant
[487] and shortly after its arrival the emperor had organized a public contest between the two missionaries and five Daoist dignitaries called the "Masters of the Five Sacred Peaks". After the appalling defeat of the Daoists, the entire court was converted. It was then that one of the missionaries had revealed to the emperor the site of one of the ancient *stūpa*s of Emperor Aśoka, thereby giving to Buddhism, so to

say, its title of nobility in China. The story is full of meaning, for the five sacred peaks of China, the *wuyue* 五岳, had for centuries been the symbols and divine guardians of Chinese territory, and the defeat of the five Daoist masters who represented them clearly symbolized the spiritual conquest of China by Buddhism.

i) From this time, Buddhism started to flourish, even though some impious monarchs tried to make it disappear, but their attempts failed and Buddhist historians do not fail to describe the terrible karmic retribution that awaits them. The moral judgment that Buddhist historiographers pass on the sovereigns of China clearly differs from that of traditional historiography. They in fact reject all sinocentrism and do not condemn sovereigns of barbarian origin: in their eyes, the only thing that matters is Buddhist piety.

j) But this is not all. From a certain point of view, China could no longer be considered as the centre of the world. Yet from another, it appeared to have been favoured amongst all countries. Towards the middle of the 4th century, a mountain range in Shanxi, the Wutai shan, was revealed as being the permanent residence of one of the greatest bodhisattvas, Mañjuśrī, the incarnation of wisdom. From the 5th century onwards it was a sacred site and a major pilgrimage centre. But Mañjuśrī was not the only great bodhisattva who had chosen to reside in China. In the following centuries, other revelations told that Samantabhadra stayed on mount Emei 峨眉 in the west of Central China and that Avalokiteśvara resided on the island of Putuo 普陀, near the mouth of the Yangzi. Thus China became the country of the "Three Great Mountains with Supernatural Powers" (*San da lingshan* 三大靈山), obviously the Buddhist equivalent of the five sacred peaks associated both with Daoism as with the Confucian cult of the state. From the 8th century, China completed its Buddhist destiny: it became a holy land of Buddhism in its own right, a second centre of truth and revelation, drawing pilgrims and students from surrounding countries and from India itself.

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If China was thus destined to play such an important role in the Buddhist
[488] scheme of history, could it not give birth to a universal monarch of the Buddhist type, a *cakravartin*? This question was explicitly asked and in Chinese Buddhist works we find unambiguous allusions to the fact that some Chinese emperors could at least potentially become saint-monarchs "Who make the wheel turn". In numerous documents dating from the

beginning of the 6th to the beginning of the 8th century, the symbolism of the *cakravartin* is mixed with the characteristics and traditional attributes of the Son of Heaven, and the theme is even occasionally found in official accounts. But one should refrain from exaggerating its significance: it generally seems to be of rhetorical nature and it is expressed neither in political claims nor in ritual practices. There is, however, one case in which an attempt was made to coherently integrate the Chinese and Indian conceptions of the universal sovereign in theory and, to a certain degree, in practice: it is that of Empress Wu.

From several points of view, the reign of Empress Wu, at the end of the 7th and beginning of the 8th century, represents the culmination of this development. Several factors contributed to it. In 690, Wu Zhao 武曌, a concubine of the second emperor of the Tang dynasty and wife of the third, already having power well in hand, took the decisive measure that would bring her the scorn of all Confucian historians: she deposed the legitimate sovereign of the Tang dynasty, appropriated the title of emperor—the only such deed by a woman in the entire history of China—and proclaimed her own and short-lived Zhou 周 dynasty. She was deposed of in 705 CE and the imperial house of the Tang dynasty was re-established. Empress Wu was held in contempt by all traditional historians not only for her unprecedented usurpation, but also because of her Buddhist bigotry. She was without any doubt a believer; in her youth, she had spent several years as a novice at a Buddhist convent. However, the protection she accorded to Buddhism also had political reasons. In order to secure her power, she had to rely on a faction who supported her against the partisans of the house of the Tang dynasty, and it was in the best interest of the Buddhist clergy to take her side. Since the beginning of the Tang dynasty, the Daoists, the prime rivals of the Buddhists, had succeeded in securing a dominant position. If, for Wu Zhao, the Buddhist Church represented a powerful ally, for the Buddhists her usurpation would guarantee their triumph. It can therefore hardly be doubted that her *coup d'état* was to a great extent inspired and supported by a Buddhist pressure group.

With Wu Zhao we have the sole example in the history of China of a sovereign who had openly proclaimed herself as *cakravartin*, i.e., universal Buddhist sovereign. In the years prior to her usurpation, numerous good
[489] omens had appeared that announced her advent, and these supernatural manifestations were at their height when, in 690 CE, a group of eminent monks presented a prophetic text to her that proclaimed that she was both a *cakravartin*-sovereign and a bodhisattva who had taken on a female

appearance (a well-attested theme in Mahāyāna Buddhism). The empress was even more easily convinced when, three years later, even clearer proof of her status was revealed by the priests at her court. One group in fact handed over to the throne a Chinese version of a Mahāyāna text, the *Sūtra of the Cloud of Jewels* (*Ratnameghasūtra*), indubitably an authentic text, but which contained an interpolation that explicitly referred to empress Wu. In this passage, the Buddha predicts that a certain god will be born in the body of a woman in the country of Mahā-Cīna 500 to 2000 years after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, and that this woman will be both bodhisattva and *cakravartin*; full of piety and love, she will protect and generously attend to the Buddhist clergy, and bring happiness and prosperity to her people.

This scriptural conformation had its full effect. In the same year, 693 CE, the empress went to the "Luminous Hall" (*mingtang* 明堂), the most sacred centre of the Confucian state-cult, and ceremonially received the title "Holy and Divine Emperor [Who Makes] the Golden Wheel [Turn]." As concrete proof of her universal power, she had replicas made, probably of metal, of the "Seven Treasures" of the *cakravartin* (Golden Wheel, White Elephant, Ideal Wife, etc.), and had these objects exhibited in the audience hall in order to impress her visitors.

An entire series of identifications can be observed in the advent and the reign of Empress Wu: that of the Chinese notion of *tianxia* 天下 ("everything under heaven"), that is, the civilized *oikouménè*, governed by the emperor of China, with the world-wide territory of the *cakravartin*; the Chinese tribute system, according to which all the peoples surrounding China are supposed to submit themselves of their own accord to the civilizing virtue of the emperor with the Buddhist notion of the universal sovereign who conquers the world through peaceful means; the good omens through which Heaven responds to the virtue of the monarch in China with their Buddhist equivalents, such as the spontaneous appearance of relics or the discovery of prophetic passages in canonical scriptures. The most striking of these connections is perhaps that of the sacred centre of the Chinese imperial cult, the "Luminous Hall" (a colossal building whose structure follows a cosmic symbolism) with the sacred enclosure, the "Magic City" (*huacheng* 化城), in which the *cakravartin* receives his consecration.

[490] But the attempt was short-lived. After the abdication of Wu Zhao in 705 CE, an anti-Buddhist reaction occurred. The Daoists regained their pre-eminent position and the Buddhist clergy lost much of its political influence. Under Empress Wu an exceptional concurrence of political

and ideological factors had allowed for a true synthesis of Chinese and Buddhist conceptions of universal sovereignty. It was the only attempt to indianize the Son of Heaven and to make Chang'an the centre of the Buddhist world.

The efforts that were made during the centuries to create a Buddhist version of the history of China seem to come from an unrestrained imagination or a deliberate will to mystify. But they have to be placed in the larger context of the sinicization of Buddhism. This extremely complex and long-lasting phenomenon can be characterized as having two complementary forms of adaptation: on the one hand, elements of the foreign doctrine were assimilated to certain Chinese equivalents and reinterpreted in traditional Chinese terms; on the other hand, elements of the Chinese tradition were integrated into the collection of Buddhist conceptions, endowed with Buddhist-like meaning. From this perspective, the image of the blessed land of Mahā-Cīna and its history simply expresses one aspect of the appropriation of Buddhism by China. The distinction between spontaneous adaptations, done in good faith, and deliberate mystifications is secondary. In my opinion, the process as such deserves more interest than the actors and their specific motives.

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We should, however, point out that these efforts at assimilation failed with the representatives of orthodox Chinese historiography. The core tradition remained completely impervious to all external influence. This goes for the entire Buddhist view of the world as a whole. Take the first two volumes of two large and authoritative encyclopedias, the Buddhist *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 of the 7th century and the secular (or rather imperial) encyclopedia *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, completed in 983, both compiled by Chinese scholars. The first one offers a vast panorama of Indian cosmogony and cosmography, cosmic eras and innumerable worlds, supernatural beings such as *nāga*s and *asura*s, the four elements and the four continents. The second one deals with the origin of heaven and earth explained in material and impersonal terms, the constellations and their earthly correspondences, the transformations of *yin*
[491] and *yang* as well as the five elements, and the physical and administrative geography of China. The reader is presented with two images of the world that have nothing in common and nevertheless co-existed in Chinese civilization.

In other words, the Buddhist view of Mahā-Cīna is only one aspect of a view that was limited to a particular milieu, that of the Buddhist sub-

culture in medieval China. It succeeded, within this subaltern culture, to maintain itself during the entire pre-modern period, co-existing with a traditional conception of history that remained radically resistant to it. But this is only one aspect of the matter, touching on the opposition between the Buddhist view and that of the Chinese elite adhering to the Confucian tradition. As soon as we leave behind these cultivated milieux, everything changes radically. Buddhism has contributed much to the formation of a holy Daoist history, amply filled with cosmic eras, paradises and hells, periodic *avatāra*s of saviors and eschatological beliefs. An equally important diffusion of Buddhist themes occurred in popular religion and in sects: until recently there were popular movements whose view of the past was dominated by the theme of the three phases of the doctrine, and which were awaiting the advent of Maitreya.

It may be concluded that this latter issue has nothing to do with Buddhism, but rather with the resistant core that was the Confucian tradition with its remarkably impervious nature to all outside influences, even at times when Buddhism had left a profound mark on all other aspects of Chinese society. Buddhism did not succeed in changing the image that the Chinese elite had of itself, just as, some ten centuries later, the Christian religion, preached by Jesuit missionaries, was to fail in its efforts to impose the model of a biblical *Heilsgeschichte* onto the history of China. The parallelism is striking: the divine revelation deciphered in the symbols of the *Book of Changes*; Fu Xi and other civilizing heroes having come from the West; Yu the Great 大禹 and the history of the Deluge; Judea as the Holy Land; Confucius as prophet, and even this ingenious reinterpretation of the "dream of emperor Ming" who, as we have seen, is supposed to have stood at the basis of the introduction of Buddhism to China: his vision of a golden man in reality referred to Jesus-Christ. Prompted by it, the emperor in fact sent a mission to India, where at that very moment Saint Thomas was preaching the Gospel. Fatal error: the embassy returned with two monks—a historical blunder that condemned China to centuries of superstition and idolatry. But the Jesuits failed to convince the
[492] *literati* just as prior to them the advocates of Buddhism had failed: they were refuted with arguments nearly identical to those of anti-Buddhist treatises of a millennium earlier: history is based on the principles of the Sage; it is therefore sacred, untouchable, and cannot be altered by heterodoxy.

A comparative analysis of the reactions of the Chinese elite to Buddhism and Christianity (as to all other systems of thought that have come from outside) constitutes an exciting field of research. But I will not engage in it today, as I have already taxed your patience enough.

© De Bary, Wm. Theodore et al., eds., *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 19–56.

BUDDHISM AND EDUCATION IN TANG TIMES

The Buddhist Ideal of Moral Training

In the Confucian perspective, education has always meant much more than purely intellectual training and the transfer of certain skills. True education, as defined by Confucian thinkers, cannot be separated from the moral improvement of the individual as a social being; from the earliest times, the terms *xue* 學 "study" and *jiao* 教 "teaching" always have had strong ethical implications. They refer to a total process of acquisition and interiorization of the norms of "the right way of life," to the study and memorization of texts that exemplify those norms, and, at the higher levels of "study," to the creation of an elite whose members—either as local leaders or as administrators—will be qualified to further their application. The nearest Western approximation would be the French *formation*, which, unfortunately, also is untranslatable. I shall not go further into this because Confucian education is not my theme. It is, however, important to note that the Confucian concept of education (in the broad sense of the word) was not exclusively directed toward the formation and selection of an administrative elite. From the beginning that elitist aim was combined with the much more comprehensive ideal of moral training and ideological manipulation of the mass of the people. Thus, Confucianism naturally tended and overtly claimed to monopolize "education" at all levels, and this obviously had important consequences for the extent to which Buddhism was able to realize its own educational ideals and potentialities.

At first sight, the Buddhist claims in this field were as far-reaching as the Confucian ones, in spite of its different orientation. Buddhism not only brought a religious message but also implied a "Buddhist way of life." However, a basic difference lies in the fact that in Buddhism such a basic reorientation of life was, first and foremost, applied to the nuclear group within the system: the *saṅgha*, the community of monks and nuns, [20] novices and postulants, those "who have left the household" (*chujia* 出家) and thereby have placed themselves outside the world of temporal Social relations and obligations. By doing so, they chose another way of life, subject

to a very detailed internal code of behavior, the *vinaya* (*lü* 律). The education received within the *saṅgha* was extensive and exacting; ideally, it implied years of hard learning, total dedication, and strenuous effort. But, here again, what we would call "education" is part of a total *formation:* religious study under a clerical teacher; the acquisition of the countless rules of conduct to be observed toward one's masters, one's fellow monks, other religious persons (such as novices or nuns), and the laity; training in ritual, liturgy, and the techniques of meditation. And all this had a moral dimension, for it had to be combined with a constant struggle to free oneself from sin, desire, and attachment. "Education"—in the narrow sense of literacy, scriptural studies, and intellectual training—merely is one component in this complex.

Apart from what took place within the *saṅgha*, the activities of the Order vis-à-vis the laity also had an educational dimension. The pious layman always has played a double role, as both donor and receiver. As a donor, he creates the material conditions for the existence of the *saṅgha* and thereby forms the support of spiritual life; in return he is entitled to receive religious doctrinal instruction, ritual expertise, and karmic retribution for his good works. The laity may also organize *saṅgha* activities serving a communal cause, such as rituals to pray for rain or the foundation of temples for the salvation of soldiers who died on the battle field. The social stratification of such lay-sponsored activities reaches from grassroots level to nationwide imperial patronage, but in all cases the *saṅgha*'s response—its part of the bargain—is, in principle, threefold: religious instruction, moral guidance, and the production of "good luck."

Religious instruction directed toward the laity basically consisted of preaching. In medieval times the doctrine was no doubt already spread in writing (scriptures and popular treatises), but this was limited by the low level of literacy and, before the generalization of printing that took place only under the Song, the rarity and high price of handwritten texts. Preaching took place at all levels, from doctrinal expositions and debates at the court to the popular explication of texts for the common people. Icons and wall paintings in temples no doubt also had a didactic purpose, as they acquainted the public with the enormous Buddhist repertory of themes and forms and thereby enriched their world of religious imagination.

Becoming a Buddhist layman was more than a simple act of faith, in which the believer "takes refuge in the Buddha, the Doctrine and the Order." The practicant solemnly promised to observe "for the rest of his/her lifetime" the Five Rules (abstaining from killing, stealing, illicit sex,

lying, and intoxicating drinks). The layman was, moreover, expected to observe certain religious obligations (notably periodic fasting) and to per-
[21] form good works.[1] Becoming a lay believer was a solemn ceremony; since late Tang times it was even confirmed by a formal certificate signed by the officiating priest.

However, these rules and obligations were rather general and could therefore easily be integrated in the normal patterns of worldly life. In fact, the remarkable success with which Buddhism was able to find its place in so many completely different cultures was largely based on the summary nature of its rules for the laity: its demands were, on the one hand, so well-defined and recognizable that they could form the base of a certain group solidarity and a sense of relation with the *saṅgha* and, on the other hand, so general that they could function in a traditionally non-Buddhist framework.

But in China, as in other Mahāyāna countries, this simple dichotomous picture of a nuclear *saṅgha* surrounded by a supportive and extraneous laity became less clearcut. Mahāyāna Buddhism tended toward blurring the division between clergy and laity, and in China this tendency toward "upgrading" the layman, the "Bodhisattva who stays in the family" (*zaijia pusa* 在家菩薩) was reinforced by environmental factors. On the part of the *saṅgha*, it led to the formation of an important intermediate category of "postulants" whose position was halfway between the religious and mundane spheres of life; later I shall return to this. On the part of the laity, it led to a more detailed formulation of its "Buddhist way of life." This is most clearly exemplified by the "Bodhisattva vows" (*pusa jie* 菩薩戒), a practice that became popular during the fifth century and that until modern times has remained a basic element in Chinese Buddhism.

1 A detailed description of the entrance ceremonial for the lay believers is found in T 1488 *Youposai jie jing* 優婆塞戒經 (trans, by Dharmakṣema, early fifth century), j. 3, section 14 (*shou jie pin*), pp. 1047a–1050b.

The flexibility of the system appears from the fact that a partial acceptance of the Vows also was possible, even down to only one Vow, without losing *upāsaka* status (ibid., p. 1049a). On the other hand, however, the bestowal of a formal certificate proving the acceptance of the vows (both the Five Vows and those of the Bodhisattva, for which see below) lends the ceremonial an official character. Many of such certificates have been found at Dunhuang (e.g., S 330, 347, 532, 2851, 4482, 4844, 4915).

The practice is based on a *sūtra* of doubtful authenticity, the translation of which is wrongly attributed to Kumārajīva.[2] The text lists eight "grave"
[22] and forty-eight "light" commandments and prohibitions, some of which are clearly designed for the clergy, whereas others are directed to the laity. But in actual practice the vows are accepted by laymen and clergy alike.[3] The vows subject the practicant to a whole series of obligations that go much farther than the original Five Rules: he or she shall seek instruction in the scriptures; take care of the sick; observe exemplary filial piety toward one's parents; strive to convert one's relatives; liberate animals held in captivity; abstain from obtaining requital even in case of murder of one's relatives; and abstain from meat and from strong-smelling vegetables like garlic and onions. The practicant is not allowed to carry arms, to possess objects used to catch animals, or to associate with soldiers. He vows not to keep a brothel, to interpret dreams, to utter spells, or to make a living as a slave-trader, a seller of animals (for slaughter), or an undertaker. All this is symptomatic of the ongoing tendency toward formulating a more detailed and specific "Buddhist way of life" for the laity, based on the Bodhisattva ideal.

Finally, at the grass-roots level Buddhism no doubt has played a comparable role by propagating the collective performance of "good works," a phenomenon mainly known to us from the many Dunhuang documents pertaining to local clubs and societies. Much has been written about these organizations and their roots in pre-Buddhist Chinese society; however, such fraternities and sororities were hybrid bodies, largely directed toward worldly ends but undoubtedly inspired by Buddhism. At this level, Buddhism has largely contributed to an ongoing process that in later imperial times resulted in the secularized—or rather Confucianized—"community contracts" (*xiangyue* 鄉約) and the charitable and cooperative institutions

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[2] T 1484 *Fanwang jing* 梵網經, very popular in China into modern times. The terminology certainly is not Kumārajīva's; the text is not mentioned by Sengyou in his *Chu sanzang ji ji* (T 2145) of CE 515, and in the early Sui catalog *Zhongjing mulu* 衆經目錄, compiled by Fajing 法經 and others and completed in 594, it is classed among the "dubious texts" (T 2146, 5:140a). On the other hand, the first references to the Bodhisattva vows being accepted by both monks and laics date from the second half of the fifth century, culminating in the 520s when some forty-eight thousand persons followed the Liang emperor Wu's example and accepted these vows.

[3] See *Hōbōgirin*, vol. II, pp. 142–146, S. v. *Bosatsukai.* For a translation of the rules and a description of the ritual as it was practiced at Foochow in the late nineteenth century, see J. J. M. de Groot, *Le Code du Mahāyāna en Chine* (Amsterdam: Joh. Müller, 1893). Also see Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, 1900–1950 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 362–364.

of lineages. It appears that the Buddhist contribution lies in reinforcing charity: the abandonment of worldly possessions and the ideal of "salvation of all beings" as a means to accumulate karmic merit.

"Education" More Strictly Defined

What has been said so far may have made clear that the subject, if taken in its larger sense of "Buddhist religious instruction and moral training," is a *mer à boire* that would virtually embrace the whole complex of lay Buddhism and a considerable part of training within the *saṅgha.* Because the subject would become unmanageable with such an approach, a rigorous restriction will be necessary. In spite of the larger context, to which I have tried to do justice in the previous section, in this section the theme will therefore be reduced to its most concrete content; education is the
[23] systematic transfer of specific skills such as literacy; and, as a result of this transfer, a special group forms whose possession of those skills distinguishes it from the rest of the community.

I shall further distinguish between (1) the training of the monk *within the saṅgha*—a system of education that, at least ideally, makes him a member of an educated elite of a special type—and (2) the educational role of the *saṅgha* vis-à-vis the laity. I must emphasize the facts that the available information largely belongs to the first aspect and that much less is known about external educational activities of the *saṅgha.* This in itself is a remarkable fact, the explanation of which must be sought in the status of the *saṅgha* in medieval China.

The Status of the Saṅgha

The period roughly between CE 500 and 850 no doubt constitutes the "Buddhist age" in Chinese history. However, this apogee of Buddhism never led to anything even remotely resembling a "Buddhist state." In all matters related to state and ideology, Buddhism remained marginal. The official political theology was maintained as the legitimation of dynastic rule: the complex of the mandate of heaven and the state cult associated with it hardly absorbed any Buddhist elements. Indian cosmology was not absorbed but in a remarkable way coexisted with the traditional Chinese. The state maintained its exclusive claim as the sole source of political and social order: not the priest but the civil administrator was the focus of authority and prestige. "Higher culture" was still largely the domain of the secular elite—the same elite from which the state recruited its officials

and courtiers. The position of the *saṅgha* in Tang China therefore basically differed from that of the clergy in medieval Western Europe. In the West, the clergy by definition was the carrier of spiritual authority and literacy; the church virtually monopolized education, and the feudal aristocracy largely left the cultural, educational, and administrative sectors for the church to manage. In China the situation was almost the reverse; the *saṅgha* was overshadowed by the existence of an established secular elite that was the focus of power, status, higher education, and literary culture. Even in its heyday the *saṅgha* was never in a position to challenge its monopoly; at best the clergy could expand in complete dependency on that elite and within the limits set by the authorities. Individual devotion, and even imperial patronage, did not change that basic configuration of power.

However, the *saṅgha* by the beginning of the Tang had already developed into a large and diversified group of literate and sometimes highly cultivated specialists. Within Chinese culture a body of a completely new type had come into being: the *saṅgha* had become a *secondary elite.*

The Saṅgha as a Secondary Elite

The formation of that clerical top level is reasonably well documented,
[24] mainly on the basis of about one thousand major biographies of Chinese "eminent monks" in the various *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳.[4] The process started in the late third century.[5] In the course of the fourth century two interdependent phenomena occurred: monks of high-class (or at least *literati* background) emerged, and Buddhism penetrated the elite, in both the

[4] The data are mainly based on the three large collections of monks' biographies: (a) T 2059 *Gaoseng zhuan*, 14 *juan* 卷, by Huijiao 慧皎 (497–554), completed ca. 530, containing 257 major and 243 subordinate biographies, from the earliest times until ca. 520; (b) T 2060 *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, 30 *juan*, by Daoxuan 道宣, (596–667), completed ca. 650, containing 331 major and 100 subordinate biographies, from the early sixth century until ca. 645; (c) T 2061 *Song Gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, 30 *juan*, by Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001) and others, completed in 988, containing 533 major and 130 subordinate biographies from early Tang to early Song. The *Gaoseng zhuan* mainly falls outside the scope of this paper; I have, moreover, for obvious reasons paid no attention to the biographies of non-Chinese missionaries. The data presented here are based upon a total of about one thousand biographies—at first sight an impressive corpus of materials. However, as I have pointed out elsewhere, (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1982): 161–176, esp. 9, 164–165), one must always be conscious of its limitations: it shows a propagandistic picture of the highest clerical elite and only occasionally contains information on the mass of the *saṅgha.*

[5] Cf. E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959), Vol. 1, pp. 6–9.

North and the South. However, during the fourth and the fifth century only a handful of monks of high-class origin were active. Between 250 and 400 biographical sources mention only ten cases of high-class background: the elite within the clergy became visible and very active, but it still was very small. In the course of the fifth century, high-class recruitment (sixteen cases) increased but not dramatically. The spectacular upward shift took place in the sixth century (fifty three cases, with thirty eight in the peak period CE 525–575) in a time of imperial patronage, both in the Lower Yangzi area (Liang 梁) and in the North (Tuoba Wei 拓跋魏). This sudden outburst of high-class recruitment no doubt also indicates a change of mentality: the *saṅgha* became "respectable"; its status rose to a level at which even very prominent families would allow their children to join the Order and become members of what had grown into a secondary elite of a very special character. I shall later discuss the new and innovative nature of the *saṅgha*; before doing so, I will present more data about this remarkable "upgrading" of the *saṅgha* shortly before and under the Sui.

In a number of cases the texts just mention that a certain monk came from a high-class family, such as Yanzong 彥宗 (556–610), whose family "for generations had belonged to the gentry, and was known as the no. 1 lineage (of the region),"[6] or Tanzang 曇藏 (566–635) who came from a "family that had been prominent from generation to generation."[7] In many cases the texts indicate a background of Confucian scholarship. Some monks were "students" (*shusheng* 書生) at prefectural or command-
[25] ery level;[8] of Jingxuan (568–611) it is said more explicitly that he became a student at the commandery school at the age of six and there studied the Classics for three years,[9] which clearly refers to elementary training at an early age. Another monk, Xuanjing 玄景 (died 606), also from a family of *literati*, at the age of fifteen had been selected as a *xiucai* 秀才,[10] and Huibin 慧斌 (573–645) had been made an assistant teacher at the prefectural school at the age of eighteen, before he joined the Order.[11] The scholarly background of several monks of this generation is mentioned,

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6 *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* (hereafter *XGSZ*), 2:436b.
7 Ibid., 13:522a.
8 Zhishun 智舜 (532–604), *XGSZ*, 17:279c; Jing'ai 靜藹 (533–578), ibid., 23:625c; Shanfu 善伏 (d. 660), ibid., 26:602c.
9 *XGSZ*, 10:502a.
10 Ibid., 17:569b.
11 Ibid., 20:591b.

as in the case of Huikuan 慧寬 (583–653) whose father was the "Erudite of the Five Classics" Yang Wei 楊瑋.[12]

But even more striking is the number of monks who came from families of high official status, often for two or three generations. A few examples suffice. Falang's 法朗 (506–581) grandfather was the prominent general and regional warlord Zhou Fengshu 周奉叔 under the Southern Qi 齊;[13] his father Zhou Shengui 周神歸 was Extraordinary Cavalier Gentleman-in-Attendance at the Liang 梁 court and governor of Pei 沛, which was also the seat of the family.[14] Huiheng 慧恆 (514–589) was the grandson of Zhou Shao 周韶, palace general under the Qi,[15] his father Zhou Fu 周覆 was military commander of Changshui 長水; he ordered his son to devote himself to Confucian studies.[16] The grandfather and the father of Daocheng 道成 (529–608) had served the Qi and the Liang in high civil and military matters.[17]

And, last but not least, for the first time we find monks from families who—rightly or wrongly—claimed an ancient and illustrious pedigree, like those from the genealogies of the great aristocratic families of medieval China, often from lineages that in the early fourth century had migrated to the Yangzi area. There are cases like Zhenhui 眞慧 (568–615), of the illustrious Chen clan of Hebei 河北, who claimed to descend from the famous general and statesman Chen Ping 陳平 (died 178 BCE), one of the founding fathers of the Han dynasty.[18] Sengmin's 僧旻 (CE 473–534) first ancestor was the first ruler of Wu, Sun Quan 孫權 (CE 181–252);[19] Seng-
[26] feng 僧鳳 (ca. 560–640) claimed direct descent from the founder of the Liang dynasty; his grandfather Xiao Yi was the Prince of Changsha 長沙,

[12] Ibid., 20:600b.

[13] Ibid., p. 477b. The biography of Zhou Fengshu is found in the *Nanqi shu* (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 29:545–547.

[14] See note 13.

[15] *Dianzhong jiangjun* 殿中將軍. I have been unable to find any other reference to this curious title; I suppose that like so many other "generals" with flowery appellations in the Nanbei-chao period it was an honorific post reserved for members of the high aristocracy.

[16] Ibid., 9:494a. As was usual in this period, Confucian studies constituted a "family tradition."

[17] Ibid., 21:611a.

[18] Ibid., 18:574b. The biography of Chen Ping is found in *Shiji*, j. 56, p. 2051 sqq, and in *Hanshu*, j. 40, p. 2038 and following.

[19] *XGSZ*, 5:461c.

the elder brother of the Liang emperor Wu 梁武帝.[20] Other monks traced their pedigree back to celebrities of the third century.[21]

After CE 600 the general rate of high-class recruitment stabilized, with a second peak in the period 650–725 (which covers, among other things, the reign of the fervently pro-Buddhist empress Wu 武). The general picture remains the same: many monks descending from high officials and scholars, and many cases in which an illustrious pedigree, sometimes reaching back to Han times, is mentioned.[22] Imperial affiliations are not lacking either: Huiming 慧明 (died 673) was a grandson of the Chen emperor Xuan 宣,[23] and our sources mention three eighth- or ninth-century monks who belonged to the imperial Li clan of the reigning Tang dynasty.[24] One of these, Guangyi 光儀 (died 735) was a son of Li Chong 李沖, the Prince of Langye 瑯琊 who in 689 together with his father, the Prince of Yue 越, had made an abortive attempt to dethrone Empress Wu; the infuriated empress had thereupon exterminated his whole family, but Guangyi had been saved by his wet-nurse.[25]

I have treated this aspect in some detail because sources show that the sixth century witnessed a second breakthrough, as spectacular as the first one of ca. CE 300 the sudden influx of high-class elements into the top of the *saṅgha.* It made the *saṅgha*, indeed, a secondary elite, not only

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[20] Ibid., 13:526b. The biography of Xiao Yi 蕭懿 is found in *Liangshu* 梁書, 23:359–360, and *Nanshi* 南史, 51:1265–1266.

[21] Huiyin 慧因 (538–627) claimed descent from the prominent fourth century scholar-official Gan Bao 干寶, known, inter alia, as the author of the *Sou shen ji* 搜神記; for his biography see *Jinshu* 晉書, 82:2149 and following (*XGSZ*, 13:522a). Huijun 慧頵 (563–630) was a descendant in the eleventh generation of the Marquis of Duting, that is, Li Jing 李景 (mid-third century), briefly mentioned in *Jinshu*, j. 46 as the father of the scholar-official Li Zhong 李重 and as governor of Qinzhou 秦州 (Ibid., 14:535a).

[22] Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) descended from the model magistrate Chen Shi 陳寔 (CE 104–187) (*XGSZ*; 4:446c), and Huicheng 慧乘 (554–630) even claimed descent from the imperial Liu clan of the Han (ibid., 24:663b). Shenjie 神楷 (fl. ca. 690) was said to have the famous Confucian scholar Guo Tai 郭泰 (127–169 CE) as his ancestor (*Song Gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, hereafter *SGSZ* 4:630c), and Xuanjue 玄覺 traced his pedigree back to another late Han worthy, Dai Gun 戴侃 (Ibid., 8:758a).

[23] *SGSZ*, 8:756b.

[24] Qi'an 齊安 (d. 842) descended from an (unnamed) member of the imperial family who had fallen into disgrace and had been banished to the far south (Yue) (*SGSZ*, 11:776b); Daopi 道丕 (889–955 in Zürcher's original article it was 878–955, no evidence of 878 though) was a member of the imperial clan, and had been born in the princely quarter of Chang'an (ibid., 17:818c); for Guangyi see note 25.

[25] *SGSZ*, 26:873a. Li Chong and Li Zhen 李貞, the Prince of Yue, respectively were a grandson and a son of Emperor Taizong 太宗. For the biography of Li Chong see *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書, 76:2663–2664.

because of its religious and scholarly qualifications but also in many cases because of the illustrious social background of many of its monks.

The Saṅgha as a New Phenomenon

It may hot be superfluous to stress the unique character of the monastic
[27] community when seen in the context of Chinese culture. Pre-Buddhist China of course knew a great variety of religious experts, and the emperor and his representatives in local government themselves had to perform certain religious rites. But the very notion of a clerical body as a corporate entity consisting of individuals who had severed all social ties was unknown. The nature of the *saṅgha* as a social and political *corpus alienum* led to a whole series of claims that, in a Chinese context, was quite formidable. As a type of organization it was unprecedented; it justified its aims and deviant behavior in metaphysical terms and yet claimed that its existence was advantageous, even most essential, for the world at large, "for the benefit of all beings." In political terms, it claimed to be an autonomous body, free from government supervision and interference, exempt from taxes and corvee, and only subject to its own very elaborate monastic code of discipline. Socially, it confronted Chinese culture with the unprecendented ideal of "leaving the family," a most drastic rejection of family-oriented morality symbolized by the adoption of a religious name. In contrast with class-ridden medieval Chinese society this open organization transcended all class distinctions. It also flouted the even more outspoken Confucian principle of excluding women from ceremonial functions; the female order of nuns, introduced in the fourth century, must have been a startling innovation. The Indian origin of the Doctrine and the notion of a center of spiritual authority outside China defied the prevailing attitude of Sinocentrism.

All these claims and tensions took shape as soon as the *saṅgha* had come into contact with the elite. They evoked various reactions, both positive and negative, and often resulted in an unstable combination of acceptance and rejection: both recognizing the right of the *saṅgha* to exist and also constantly checking its growth and controlling its activities. This ambivalent attitude understandably characterized the religious policy of the Tang. I have shown how, in the decades just preceding the reunification of the realm, the *saṅgha* had developed into an important secondary elite, the top layer of which was closely interwoven with the secular upper class—an "alternative intelligentsia" with powerful backing. But at the same time the *saṅgha*'s claims were, in principle and potentially, destructive for state and society, and it consequently had to be controlled.

But Tang religious policy was not merely repressive. It also aimed at a certain "incapsulation" of the clergy into the Chinese system—a constant attempt to transform the *saṅgha* from an alien body, standing outside state and society, into a functional group of "religious experts." In the Chinese context this integration naturally took the form of bureaucratization. It can be recognised in a whole set of measures: administrative control, both external and internal; the introduction of clerical titles, insignia, and posthumous names; the creation of semibureaucratic institutions such as the Translation Office; the sale of ordination certificates comparable to the sale of secular ranks and titles; the compilation of the Buddhist Canon
[28] under imperial auspices; and the system of clerical examinations with its various "categories," *ke* 科, no doubt inspired by its secular counterpart. For my subject the last item is most important. The clerical examinations were not only intended to restrict the size of the *saṅgha*, but they were also aimed at "the selection of talent." This Confucian conception had important consequences for education within the *saṅgha*, for, just as in the secular sphere, this "talent" was primarily associated with literacy, the ability to memorize texts, and proficiency in expressing one's ideas in standardized stylistic forms.

Training within the Saṅgha

What I have said so far about the nature, the status, and the functioning of the Buddhist clergy was meant merely as an introduction, somewhat lengthy, but indispensable to place our first subject—the training of the aspirant monk within the *saṅgha*—in its proper perspective. My starting point is the fact that in Sui and Tang times the clergy must have been one of the most educated (or, more specifically, "literate") groups of the population even if the monk's literary training was of a very special type.

The highest level of this type of education was the domain of the tiny top of the clerical pyramid: the *magisitri*, well-versed in Buddhist scriptural and scholastic literature. But also at a lower level the average monk had to possess a certain degree of literary skill. He had to memorize a considerable amount of text in order to be admitted into the *saṅgha*, and some of his daily activities required a degree of literacy no doubt far above that of the average layman. The importance of texts in the practice of Buddhism also appears from the phenomenon of the monastic library: in the Tang, before the spread of printing, the libraries in Buddhist monasteries probably constituted the only sizable collections of books outside the capital.

The importance of the *saṅgha* as an educated minority becomes even more evident if we look at its estimated size. Unfortunately there are no clerical census figures for this period; estimates are usually based on the 260,500 monks and nuns secularized during the great repression of Buddhism in CE 845. However, this figure certainly does not represent the size of the *saṅgha* as a whole, and it does not agree with certain other data.[26] It may well be that the figure of 260,500 refers to fully ordained monks and nuns, who no doubt constituted a minority. Including the postulants and novices, the real figure would at least have to be doubled; the real size of the *saṅgha* in mid-Tang times may have been somewhere between six hundred thousand and one million, that is, 1.5 percent to 2 percent of the population.

By setting out to study the "intramural education" within the *saṅgha*, a number of questions arise. In what way, and at what age, was one admit-
[29] ted to the Order, and what were the most common motivations to do so? What were the disciple's obligations toward his teacher(s)? Was he trained in reading and memorizing Buddhist texts, or was there a preliminary stage of training in "basic literacy"? If so, what elementary texts were used? Which Buddhist texts were most important in training? Which minimal literary skills were required to become ordained?

These questions can only partially be answered. The available information is scattered and scanty; not only are Chinese biographers, religious and secular alike, generally uninterested in the early youth experiences of their personages, apart from stereotyped "wonder child" anecdotes, but also the more significant activities of the "eminent monks" only took place later in their lives. For some answers, I must turn to the invaluable Dunhuang materials, always considering the question of how far Dunhuang is representative. Some information is contained in *Vinaya* passages devoted to novices and to ordination, but these formal rules were probably honored in the breach.

In theory, entrance into the *saṅgha* was basically a matter of faith and of individual choice. That aspect understandably looms large in the monks' biographies, even in the case of very young children; they contain many anecdotal passages about premature piety and attempts to persuade

[26] According to T 2126 (*Seng shi lüe* 僧史略) by Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001), 40:247c, in the year 830, when it was decided to grant ordination certificates to all "irregular" monks and nuns, no less than 700,000 applied to be ordained.

unwilling parents.[27] In actual fact, poor families may often have sent their children to a monastery out of sheer necessity and probably also because the clerical state offered a chance to acquire a certain degree of literacy. It is, however, important to note that the *Vinaya* expressly forbids accepting any novice without the consent of his or her parents.

Even more important for my subject is the question of the age of entrance; this obviously is related to the nature and level of monastic education. The *Vinaya* rules are clear and strict, but they appear to reflect ideal rather than real practice. According to the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya*, in principle no person could be admitted below the age of eleven, with the exception of orphans without any remaining relative—they could
[30] be taken into the monastery as "crow chasers" (*qu wu* 驅烏), that is, to perform the lightest menial tasks.[28] The *Mahāsāṅghika-vinaya* places the normal minimum age at thirteen: "crow chasers" must be at least six years of age.[29] The period of the novice's training ends with his or her full ordination, which has a minimum age-limit of nineteen years.

If the candidate is accepted as a novice, he is placed under the authority of two teachers. One of these, called *heshang* 和尚, trains him in disciplinary matters such as the observance of the Ten Rules;[30] the other one, usually called *ācārya* (*asheli* 阿闍梨) is charged with education in a more restricted sense, including the memorization of texts. Apart from

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[27] Some examples of parental resistance: *SGSZ*, 4:731a (Sengyuan 僧瑗, 638–689); ibid., 10:769a (Daowu 道悟, 760–820, a case of a hunger-strike); ibid., 13:787b (Quanfu 全付, 881–947); ibid., 16:810a (Zhenjun 貞峻, 846–924). It is possible that the natural resistance felt by a Chinese family against a son entering the Order form the background of one of the most striking features of the monk's biographies of this period: the great number of reported cases in which the mother during pregnancy or shortly before the conception has a prophetic dream in which the birth of a prominent monk is foretold or symbolically suggested. The content of the dreams shows much variation, although in general the symbolism is obvious enough. In some cases the expectant mother has a vision of monks who convey the message (e.g., *SGSZ*, 4:731a); in other cases she sees a sheen of light or smells incense (ibid., 10:717a, 15:803b), she dreams that she touches sacred objects in a temple (ibid., 7:751a) or that the moon penetrates into her bosom (ibid., 14:790b); she sees an Indian monk enter her home (ibid., 7:751a), she dreams that in front of her a pagoda rises up in heaven (ibid., 12:783b), and so on. Perhaps the theme serves as a kind of legitimation: the child was destined to become a monk so the family could do nothing about it.

[28] The rules for the admission of novices are treated in *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* (T 1428 *Si fen lü*), trans. by Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, late fourth century), 33–34:801b–812c. For the passage on the minimum age for admission, see ibid., p. 810c.

[29] T 1425, *Mahāsāṅghika-vinaya* (trans. Buddhabhadra, early fifth century), 29:461b.

[30] (1) Not killing; (2) not stealing; (3) no sexual intercourse; (4) not lying; (5) no alcoholic beverages; (6) no comfortable bed; (7) no ornaments; (8) no singing and no dancing; (9) not using or possessing gold or other precious things; (10) not eating beyond the fixed dinnertime.

the training in texts,[31] in liturgy, and in the countless rules of monastic life, the novice is expected to serve his master in every respect. The disciplinary texts describe such tasks in great detail, down to the way in which the pupil must cleanse his master's bowl and sweep the floor of his cell.[32]

But we should not rely too much upon this ideal image. In China, the practice of monastic life was no doubt less rigid. Thus, in a Song commentary to the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* Yuanzhao distinguishes between real novices (*fatong shami* 法同沙彌, "*śramaṇera* who conform to the Doctrine") who observe the Ten Rules and formal (*xingtong shami* 形同沙彌) novices who only accept the tonsure.[33] Moreover, already in Tang times we find the first traces of a category of clerical candidates whose status is still below that of the novices: the (adult) "practicants" (*xingzhe* 行者) who were called "boys" (*tongzi* 童子) if they were very young. I shall call them "postulants," the term used by Kenneth Ch'en.[34] The
[31] postulant stands halfway between the monastery and secular life: at his entrance he accepts the layman's Five Rules (not the novice's Ten); he studies Buddhist scriptures and works in the monastery in a subservient position, but he keeps his hair and is not exempted from taxes and corvee labor. After at least one year of service he can be accepted as a novice. This category of "disciples who keep their hair" (*liu fa dizi* 留髮弟子) is unknown in Indian Buddhism; its appearance in China is yet another symptom of the blurring of the borderline between clergy and lay believers in later Chinese Buddhism.

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[31] Learning how to recite texts under the ācārya's guidance is explicitly mentioned in all the *Vinayas* as one of the essential parts of the training program. In the *Mahāsāṅghika-vinaya* this part is even mentioned separately, on a par with the whole rest of religious training (T 1425, 29:461a).

[32] E.g., the seventy-two rules regarding the right way of speaking with the master, entering his cell, laying out his clothes, preparing his bath, etc., as enumerated in the anonymous, probably fourth century T 1471, *Shami shi jiefa bing weiyi* 沙彌十戒法并威儀; in the analogous T 1472 *Shami weiyi jing* 沙彌威儀經, trans. Guṇavarman, ca. 431, and in Dānapāla's version of ca. 1000, T 1473 *Shami shijie yize jing* 沙彌十戒儀則經.

[33] T 1805 *Sifen lü xingshi chao zichi ji* 四分律行事鈔資持記 (late eleventh century), III.4:416b.

[34] Cf. Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 245, Ch'en denotes such postulants with the Chinese term *tongxing* 同行. However, *tongxing* is a contracted term combining the first syllables of "boys" (*tongzi*) and "(adult) practicants" (*xingzhe*). The two categories are clearly distinguished by Daocheng 道誠 in his *Shishi yaolan* 釋氏要覽 (CE 1019), T 2127, 1:166c: "from the age of seven to fifteen (*sui* 歲) they all are called *tongzi*," and ibid., p. 167a: "At the age of sixteen (*sui*) and beyond, they have to be called *xingzhe*."

However, historical sources show that practice often did not agree with the *Vinaya* prescriptions. For the Sui and Tang periods in some 160 cases the age of entrance is specified. The average age—eleven years—agrees with the *Vinaya*, but there are many cases of entrance at a younger age, with a clear high at six to eight years (38 cases, e.g., nearly one-quarter) and a number of remarkably young cases: two of five years, and two of four. This is important because it shows that in such cases monastic training (and notably literary education) must have comprised the acquisition of elementary literacy.

The "postulantship" mentioned above was a period of study and training before becoming a novice. This is amply confirmed by biographical sources. Around CE 650 the first reference appears to a distinction between the state of novice and that of a postulant; the same passage also makes clear that, in accordance with the Tang policy of controlling the number of ordinations, the entrance as a novice was subjected to government approval. It relates how the (future) monk Sengyuan at the age of twelve became a disciple (*dizi* 弟子) of Huiyan 慧嚴 in the Huqiu 虎丘 monastery and how he, twelve years later in 662, "by edict was allowed to shave his head." Only then did he formally become a novice, for the text clearly states that later, under another master, he was fully ordained.[35] The same combination of initial probationary period and government controlled admission to the novitiate appears in the biography of Shenqing 神清, who around 760 at the age of twelve became a "disciple" and studied the *Lotus sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, and the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*. "At that time the official regulations were very strict: only those among the house-leavers who were able to recite a thousand leaves (of text) were allowed to be tonsured." Thanks to his thorough scriptural studies Shenqing passed the test and became a novice in the Dali 大曆 (766–780).[36] As I shall show, the requirement to know by heart "a thousand pages" is, indeed, extreme; later I will comment upon the quantities of memorized text. The postulant Daobiao 道標 (739–823) also had studied the scriptures in the monastery before passing the exam (757) and becoming a novice; after another eight years (765) he was fully ordained.[37] Even more explicit is the case of Dayi 大義 (691–780), another hard-working student.
[32] When in 705 emperor Zhongzong 中宗 restored the Tang, he permitted,

[35] *SGSZ*, 4:731a.
[36] Ibid., 6:740c.
[37] Ibid., 15:803c.

by a special act of grace, that persons could enter the *saṅgha*, and so the local governor Hu Yuanli 胡元禮 held an examination on scriptural exegesis (*kaoshi jingyi* 考試經義). Dayi came through a number 1 (*ge zhong diyi* 格中第一: a terminology borrowed from the civil examination system) and became a novice.[38]

The recorded cases become more numerous in the ninth and the tenth century.[39] The introduction of a probationary period before the novitiate sometimes appears to have shortened the latter. Thus, Xuanchang 玄暢, who became a "disciple" as an eight-year-old boy only became a novice in his eighteenth year and received full ordination one year later.[40] The significance of this development for my subject is obvious: in this way, an essential part of scriptural training was shifted to an informal sphere, before the novitiate and halfway between monastery and secular life. Monastic life, formally starting with the novitiate, was expanded to include a group of usually very young postulants, "disciples who kept their hair"; unlike the regular novices, their number was not subjected to official restrictions.

Clerical Examinations and the Test Requirements

The introduction of selective clerical examinations[41] is one of the most characteristic features of Tang Buddhism. It clearly served two purposes: controlling the size of the *saṅgha* and "upgrading" the clergy as a body of religious specialists. The influence of the civil examination system introduced near the end of the sixth century is evident. Like their secular counterpart, the clerical examinations fell under the Board of Rites; candidates were "recommended" and examined under the supervision of the local authorities; admission to the Order was usually bound to specified quotas, and the terminology was largely borrowed from the civil examinations.

It is probable that when the system was introduced the primary aim was to control the size of the *saṅgha*. As a result of the privileged position of Buddhism under Empress Wu (r. 685–705), the clergy had no doubt

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[38] Ibid., 15:800a.

[39] E.g., Xuanyue 玄約 (ca. 840), *SGSZ*, 7:746a; Sengzhao 僧照 (d. 891), ibid., p. 749a; Fuzhang 傅章 (ca. 910), ibid., p. 751a; Wenxi 文喜 (d. 826), ibid., 12:783c; Zhenjun (d. 859), ibid., 16:810a; Xuanchang (ca. 810), ibid., 17:818a.

[40] *SGSZ*, 17:818a.

[41] For a general survey of government policy vis-à-vis the ordination of monks, including the clerical examinations, see Michihata Ryōshū 道端良秀, *Tōdai bukkyōshi no kenkyū* 唐代仏教史の研究 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan 法蔵館, 1967), j. 3 pp. 29–94.

increased greatly. After Zhongzong had restored the Tang (705), one of his first measures was the institution of clerical examinations in scriptural exegesis for postulants.[42] It is only known that the requirements com-
[33] prised the all-important *Lotus sūtra:* on that occasion the young Dayi got his grade with highest honors by reciting that scripture.[43] The *SGSZ* adds that the examination was held under the supervision of the governor.[44]

Fifty years later the empire was again in danger. The grave crisis caused by the revolt of An Lushan 安祿山 required drastic measures, also in the sphere of the supernatural. In order magically to reinforce the power of the dynasty, Suzong 肅宗 in 758 ordered Buddhist temples to be built at each of the five sacred mountains, the symbols and protectors of the territory. Of course, the effectiveness of his measure wholly depended on the "quality" of the monks, and perhaps that is why on that occasion the emperor also gave new guidelines for the clerical examinations. Prominent monks were instructed to select postulants for the novitiate, and the amount of memorized text was fixed at five hundred pages[45]—a detail that is corroborated by the *SGSZ*,[46] However, this figure apparently refers to a minimum requirement; another *SGSZ* passage speaks of seven hundred pages.[47] And it appears that personal status and influence occasionally could also lead to much lower figures.[48] There is another reason to question the efficacy of the system, for during the same crisis the first attempt was made to refill the depleted treasury by selling ordination certificates—a malpractice that reached enormous proportions under the Song.

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42 *Shishi jigu lüe*, by Jue'an 覺岸 (1266–1355), T 2037, 3:822. There are some traces of still earlier clerical examinations, held by a committee of prominent monks (fifty dade) for the selection of 150 postulants, as early as 658; cf. Michihata *Tōdai bukkyōshi no kenkyū*, p. 34. However, probably this *ad hoc* measure was limited to the metropolitan area.

43 *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統記, by Zhipan 志磐 (mid-thirteenth century), T 2035, 30:371b.

44 *SGSZ*, 15:600a.

45 *Shishi tongjian* 釋氏通鑒, by Benjue 本覺 (Song), j. 9, quoted by Michihata, *Tōdai bukkyōshi no kenkyū*, p. 35.

46 *SGSZ*, 15:803a, biography of Zhencheng 眞乘.

47 Ibid., 15:803c, biography of Daobiao.

48 T 2120 *Biaozhi ji* 表制集, a collection of memorials submitted to the authorities by Amoghavajra (Bukong 不空, 905–974), collected and published by his collaborator Yuanzhao 圓照 around 778, in six *juan.* On p. 835c in a memorial of the year 767 he asks permission for ordination (as novices) on behalf of some postulants, specifying the texts that they have memorized and the number of pages involved. Most texts mentioned here are *dhāraṇī*, in accordance with Amoghavajra's tantric specialization. In one case the number of pages memorized is not more than 120.

In 773, Emperor Daizong introduced a more diversified program, no doubt based on the civil examinations system. Clerical examinations were divided into three "categories" *ke*): Scriptures (*jing* 經), Discipline (*lü* 律), and Treatises (*lun* 論), that is, scholastics.[49] This meant an important shift from form, the purely mechanical memorization of texts, to content. The candidate's knowledge and insight were tested by letting him write an essay, although memorization no doubt was also required.

The same devaluation of memorization appears from a measure of the year 825: the authorities involved[50] were ordered by edict to create a [34] clerical examination committee charged with testing the postulants' ready knowledge. In this case only 150 pages were demanded from male candidates and 100 from female ones.[51]

Under Wenzong 文宗 (r. 827–841), who again tried to subject the *saṅgha* to strict government control, the demands suddenly became excessive: 1,000 pages of memorized texts.[52] But that was a last attempt, and, moreover, one incompatible with another measure taken in 830 (cf. note 27) that granted ordination certificates to all illegal monks and nuns. Shortly thereafter the great persecution of Buddhism took place (842–845); it apparently ended the old-style clerical examinations. When Xuanzong 宣宗 almost immediately after his father's death (847) restored the *saṅgha*, he introduced examinations of a new type, in which the candidates were not tested on scriptural knowledge but on "religious quality"; the new three categories were defined as "disciplinary behavior," "meditation," and "wisdom."[53]

Thus, the general picture is one of an erratic policy, without stable guidelines and subject to great fluctuations. The amount of memorization varied from a very reasonable 150 pages (about one-half of the *Lotus*

[49] *SGSZ* 16:807a; biography of Shencou 神湊.

[50] The "Commissioners of Merit of the Two Avenues" (*liangjie gongde shi* 兩街功德使), the civil organ that since the late eighth century was responsible for controlling the *saṅgha*; cf. Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆, "Tō chūki irai no chōan no kudokushi 唐中期以来の長安の功徳使," in *Tōkō gakukō* 東方学報 4 (1933):368–406. The "two avenues" refer to the eastern and western halves into which the capital was divided. In 807 the authority of this organ was enlarged to include the task of controlling the Daoist clergy as well (cf. T 2126 *Sengshi lüe* 僧史略, 2:245c, and T 2035 *Fozu tongji*, 41:380b).

[51] *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜, (reprint, Zhonghua shuju: Peking, 1960), 42:482.

[52] *SGSZ*, 6:740c, biography of Shenqing 神清, where the text also expressly says that at that time the requirements had been made very severe. Shenqing was examined under the supervision of the prefect of Mianzhou 綿州 (present-day Mianyang 綿陽 in Sichuan 四川), which again shows that also at a local level the secular authorities controlled the admission to the *saṅgha.*

[53] T 2035 *Fozu tongji*, 42:388b.

sūtra) to the extreme demand of 1,000 pages.[54] However, we must assume that the system did contribute to the intellectual level of the *saṅgha* as a secondary elite in Tang times, at least in terms of literacy.

There is no detailed description of the content of the "required reading," but from scattered pieces of information at least an impression of
[35] what was demanded is available. Training centered upon the memorization (*song* 誦, *nian* 念) of considerable amounts of scriptural text, counted in "rolls" (*juan* 卷), "sheets" (*zhi* 紙), or "syllables" (*yan* 言, *zi* 字). The amounts given in the biographies as having been memorized by individual monks are not representative because they are mentioned as exceptional feats: a daily absorption of "five pages";[55] "a thousand characters";[56] "several thousands"[57] or "eight thousand characters";[58] a total memorization of "more than twenty rolls,"[59] or even "forty rolls."[60]

More significant is the information on the nature of the texts memorized. It confirms the supreme importance of the *Lotus sūtra* (no doubt in Kumārajīva's version), by far the most popular scripture in medieval Chinese Buddhism.[61] Of the forty-one cases in which specific texts are

[54] These "pages" or "sheets," *zhi*, were strips of paper glued together to form a book-roll. The size of such sheets had at an early age been standardized at a width of ca. 24 cm. (one Han foot) and a length of 41 to 48.5 cm. The number of columns per sheet was not fixed (the Dunhuang manuscripts show great variation), neither was the number of characters per column (in the Dunhuang materials varying from twelve to more than fifty). Cf. Tsien Tsuen-hsuin, *Written on Bamboo and Silk* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) pp. 153–155. On the other hand, the practice of fixing the requirements for the examinations at a certain round number of "sheets" proves that in these cases *zhi* denotes a certain standard unit of counting. We can perhaps derive that "standard sheet" from the number of *zhi* presented in the last two chapters of the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 CE 730 (T 2124, j.19–20): *Ru zang lu* 入藏錄, containing a list of manuscripts recently added to the imperial collection). In this list the size of Kumārajīva's version of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* is "61 *zhi*" (T 2124, p. 703c). Because the *Lotus sūtra* contains approximately seventy-eight thousand characters, and the *Vimalakírti* about twenty-nine thousand, it follows that of both scriptures the average "sheet" counted about five hundred characters. Perhaps this was the norm used for fixing the amount of memorized text for the clerical examinations.

[55] *XGSZ* 14:537b.

[56] Ibid., 16:557a.

[57] *SGSZ*, 4:729c.

[58] Ibid., 7:746a.

[59] Ibid., 7:749c.

[60] *XGSZ*, 3:442a.

[61] For the all-important place occupied by the *Lotus sūtra* in the Dunhuang materials, see Lionel Giles, *Six Centuries at Tun-huang* (London: The Chinese Society, 1944), p. 7. His observation is fully supported by the historical and bibliographical sources in which the number of significant references to the *Lotus sūtra* (such as recorded cases of study, recital, explanation, the writing of prefaces and commentaries, etc.) is roughly equal to the number of references to all other scriptures taken together.

mentioned in relation to the training phase, the *Lotus sūtra* figures sixteen times and the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* six times each.

The memorization of a long and complicated text like the *Lotus sūtra* or the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* was not an easy job; the gifted Zhenhui 貞誨 (862–935) spent a full year on it.[62] Even if the texts required for the civil examinations were, in general, far more difficult, it cannot be denied that such a program did lead to a fair level of literacy. Another interesting aspect is the fact that in this preliminary stage the texts chosen (or rather "imposed," for they were "given" (*shou* 授) by the master) practically are limited to well-known scriptures (*sūtra*); the role played by scholastic texts is minimal. The biographical sources clearly show that scholastic study—closely related to the various "schools" of Tang Buddhism—took place after full ordination and very often in other centers. That phase of "specialization" did not belong to the curriculum of the postulant or novice.[63]

Elementary Training in Secular Texts in the Monastery

There are unmistakable signs that besides Buddhist *sūtras* Confucian texts
[36] were also studied in the monastery—a practice that can be traced back to the fourth century.[64] Unfortunately, our biographical sources only refer to it in very general terms, such as "at the age of twelve he became a novice, and achieved mastery in both canonical and secular texts."[65] From such statements I cannot infer what non-Buddhist texts were studied; in the next section I shall try to provide some information through indirect evidence.

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62 *SGSZ*, 7:748a.

63 In the last phase of the novitiate, or shortly after full ordination, many monks (at least the "eminent" ones of whom we have biographies) enter a period of itinerant travel and study—a way of advanced training and deepening of knowledge and experience that curiously resembles the *Wanderleben* of medieval students in Western Europe. Within the limits of this chapter it is impossible to do justice to that aspect. A study of the phenomenon in its totality—the Indian background of wandering mendicant monkhood; the movement of monks among different centers; their study under various masters, and the way in which this phase of "roaming about" (*you fang* 遊方) influenced their later activities—would constitute an important contribution to knowledge of the practice of Chinese Buddhism of the Tang period.

64 Cf. Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest of China*, Vol. 7, p. 9.

65 Daohong 道洪, ca. 590, *XGSZ*, 15:547; analogous remarks on Falin 法琳, ca. 635, ibid., 24:636b: Yijing 義淨, ca. 640, *SGSZ*, 1:710b; Dayi, ca. 700, ibid., 15:800a; Shenyong 神邕 ca. 725, ibid., 19:815b.

It is clear that neither the great Mahāyāna scriptures nor the Confucian classics could be used in elementary teaching, and many postulants and novices were young children who needed training in basic literacy. Historical sources are silent about this aspect. However, in order to get a glimpse of it I can turn to a large body of Dunhuang documents, of a type to which so far little attention has been given but which in this perspective becomes very relevant: the writing exercise. Hundreds of such attempts to master the Chinese script have been preserved. In many cases it is evident that they were written under guidance: they often contain corrections and sometimes also large-size model characters more or less successfully copied by the pupil. The nature of the texts provides an impression of these first *gradus ad Parnassum.*

As could be expected, the most commonly used primer is the "Thousand Character Text" (*Qian zi wen* 千字文), the well-known abecedarium created by Zhou Xingsi 周興嗣 around CE 540; because of its unique features (each character occurs only once, and the text can easily be memorized by its rhyme and tetrasyllabic structure), the primer has been used as a mnemonic primer into modern times.

The writing exercises are mostly found on the verso side of book-rolls where the *recto* side carries the main text(s). But they are also found on loose pieces of paper, in the empty space at the end of a text, or even between columns of other writings—apparently paper was too expensive to be wasted. They vary from the most primitive scribbles, obviously the first attempts at writing, to well-developed characters. Combined with the known age of many beginners—five or six years—they move readers by the picture they evoke: tip of the tongue protruding; a tiny hand clutching an unwieldy writing brush.

Many examples show the relation with elementary education. In P 3114
[37] (Fig. 1) the master has written, in a horizontal line at the tip of the scroll, a series of model characters; a rather advanced pupil has repeated each character many times in vertical columns. The same system, but in a much less developed hand, is found in S 2703 (Fig. 2). It contains, in endless repetition, lines 55–66 and 34–48 of the *Qian zi wen*, with the added remark that this is the fruit of seven day's labor (24–26 and 18–21 of two unspecified months). More advanced are S 5491 (Fig. 3) and especially S 5657 (Fig. 4), an excellent piece of homework based on *Qian zi wen*, lines 46–47. But for the real beginners even that primer was too complicated: S 4106 (Fig. 5) shows us the desperate attempts of the first hour, limited to some very simple characters. The most advanced pupils could concentrate on writing and memorizing rare characters and variants, sometimes adding the pronunciation (e.g., S 4622; Fig. 6).

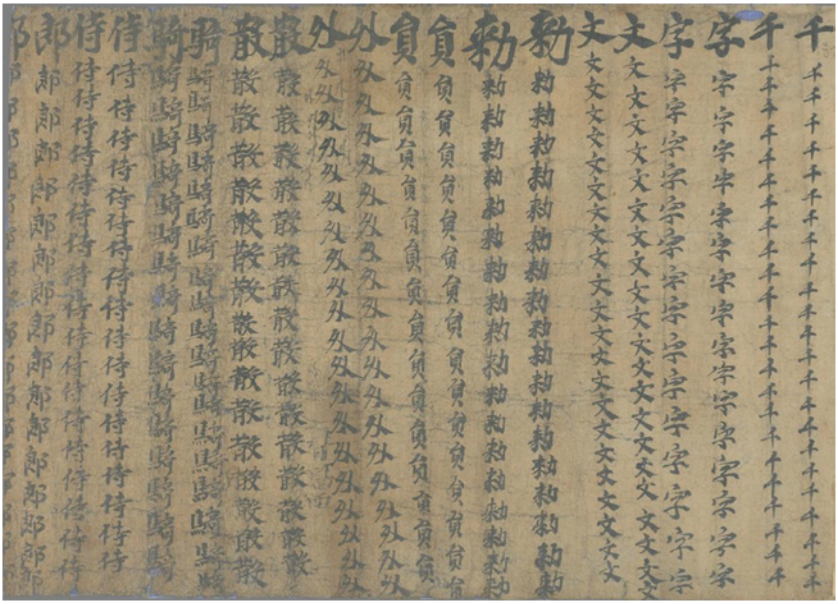


Fig. 1. Writing exercise: an advanced student. (P 3114)

The next stage probably consisted of copying the moralistic compendiums "Essential Teaching for the Instruction of Young People," *Kaimeng yaoxun* 開蒙要訓, a short text in rhyming four-syllable lines, composed by Ma Renshou. In Tang times this text was often used as a primer: the Dunhuang materials contain many, mostly fragmentary, writing exercises based on it (e.g., P 3029; Fig. 7). The same role was played by another popular textbook, the "Family Teachings of Taigong," *Taigong jiajiao* 太公家教. Another type of secular text copied, probably at a still more advanced level, contained practical exercises such as passages from model letters.

Even though these texts themselves are secular, it is clear that they were produced in a religious context and were associated with Buddhism and monastic life. This is shown by many writing exercises based on Buddhist texts and sometimes even containing a mixture of secular and Buddhist elements. For example, P 3168 (Fig. 8) combines seven columns of *Qian zi wen* with a number of repeated Buddhist terms, and S 5712 (Fig. 9) shows a list of rare and variant characters and some Buddhist expressions.



[38] Fig. 2. Writing exercise based on *Qian zi wen:* a less developed hand. (S 2703)



[39] Fig. 3. Writing exercise; a more advanced student. (S 5491)

The Role of the Monastery in Educating the Laity

Thus far I have mainly been dealing with education within the *saṅgha* although I cannot be quite sure in the case of writing exercises in which laymen also may have been involved. Turning to the external educational activities, I must repeat that this aspect is less well-documented than the first. Apart from a number of stray references in secular literature, the main body of evidence suggesting that the monastery played such a role is found in the Dunhuang materials.

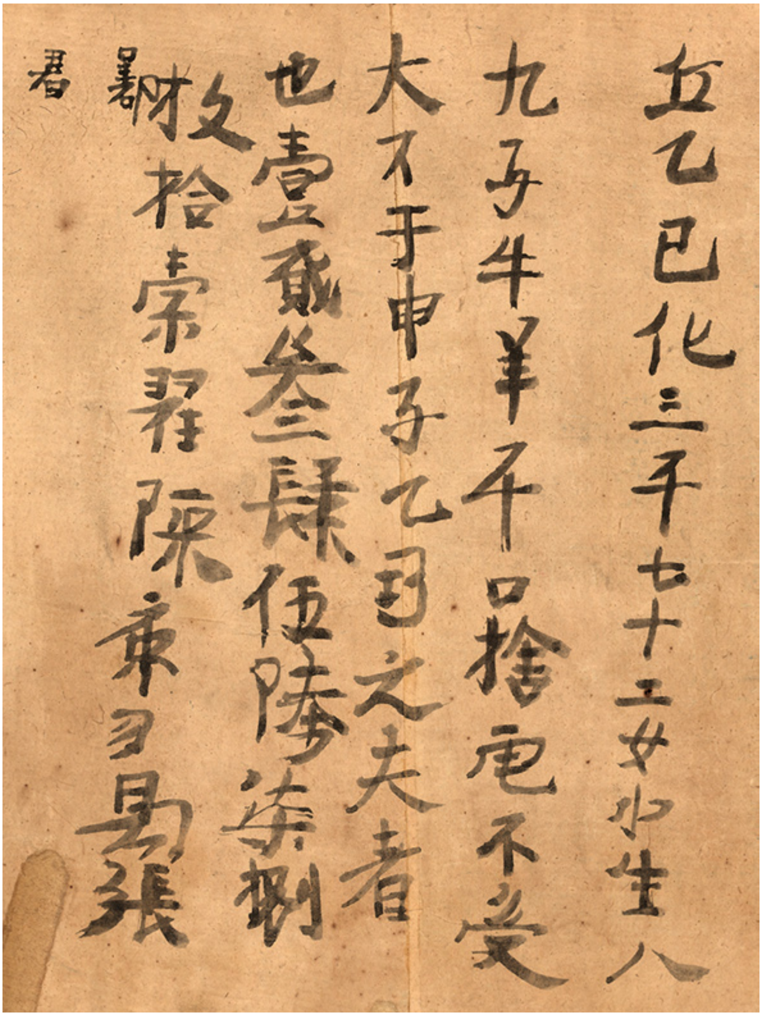
I should stress that running schools for the lay public is not one of the well-known social or charitable activities of the Buddhist clergy in Tang China, as the establishment of dispensaries and orphanages was. As I said before, the role of Buddhism in education was restricted, because of the dominance of Confucianism in this sector of social activity. At the middle and higher levels of education (secondary training in district schools and upward) one must assume that Buddhist institutions played no role, for, if they did, they probably would have been mentioned—and condemned—in secular sources. Monastic activities in the field of external education must therefore be sought at grass-roots level, in the informative sphere of the "community schools" (*xiangxue* 鄉學, *xiangxu* 庠序) relatively free from the regulating influence of the official school system.

Unfortunately, little is known about such village schools in Tang times, apart from the fact that they existed. There is, of course, abundant infor-
[40] mation on the central institutions in the capital: the imperial colleges (*Guozi xue* 國子學 and *Taixue* 太學, in principle only accessible to sons of high officials, and the *si men xue* 四門學, also open to selected commoners and sons of officials of the middle ranks). But that was the top. As

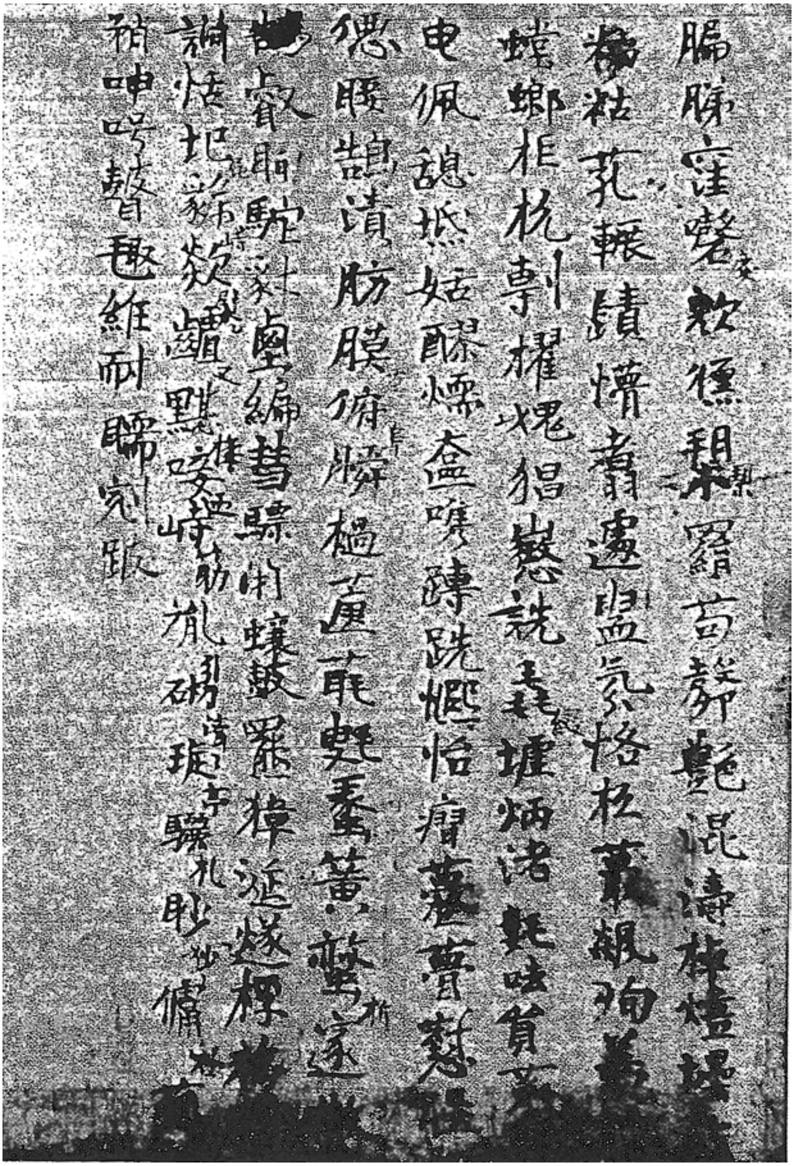


Fig. 4. Writing exercise based on *Qian zi wen:* an especially advanced student. (S 5657)

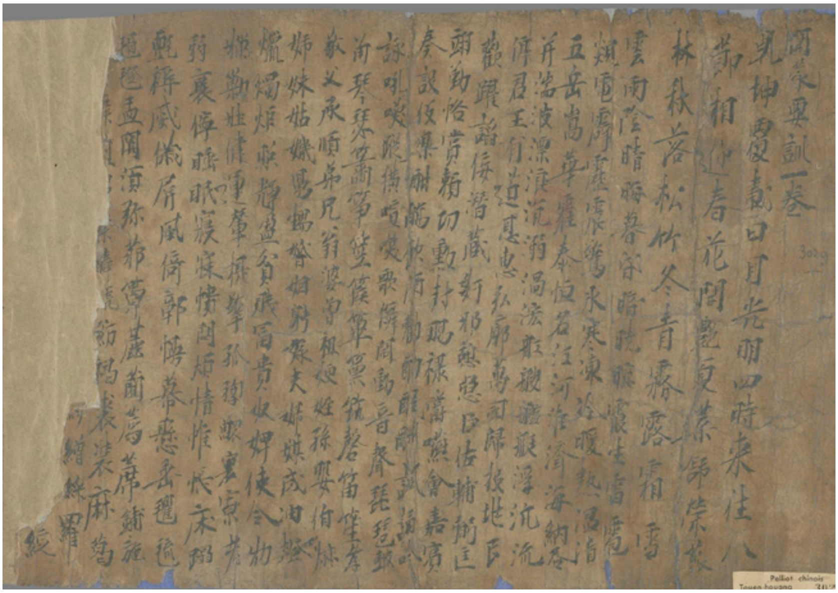
usual, the information becomes less specific—and probably more schematized—at the lower levels. There were official schools at prefecture and county levels (*zhouxue* 州學, *xianxue* 縣學), each divided into several categories according to the relative importance of the administrative unit. But even at the *xian* level these official schools did not engage in elementary education. Thus, the lowest category of county school, with a modest staff of one "professor of Classics" (*jingxue boshi* 經學博士) and one assistant teacher (*zhujiao* 助教), admitted students at the age of seventeen to



[41] Fig. 5. Writing exercise; very simple characters. (S 4106)



[42] Fig. 6. Writing exercise: rare characters and variants. (S 4622)



[43] Fig. 7. Writing exercise based on *Kai meng yao xun.* (P 3029)

twenty four years, and its curriculum was limited to the Five Classics.[66] However, there also were private schools, probably of a more elementary character, for an edict of 733 specifically allows commoners who have set up such schools to send pupils (probably only the best ones) to the prefectural and district schools for instruction in the Classics.[67] The situation becomes wholly unclear at *xiang* 鄉 level, beyond the reach of the official educational system.

However, Buddhist biographical sources occasionally show that such village schools did function, and they, unlike the official schools, were visited by young boys. Thus, the monk Niuyun 牛雲 (672–735) in his early youth seemed to be stupid. He was sent to the *xiangxue* where "after a whole day he still did not know one character"; at the age of eleven his desperate parents finally sent him to a monastery.[68] As a young boy, Changjue 常覺
[44] (892–968) in the *xiangxue* surpassed all other pupils in "reciting the

[66] Cf. Yu Shulin 余書麟, *Zhongguo jiaoyu shi* 中國教育史 (Taipei: Taiwan Provincial Normal University, 1961), 5:409–528; for education at the local level see especially pp. 578–585.

[67] Cf. ibid., p. 431.

[68] *SGSZ*, 21:943b.

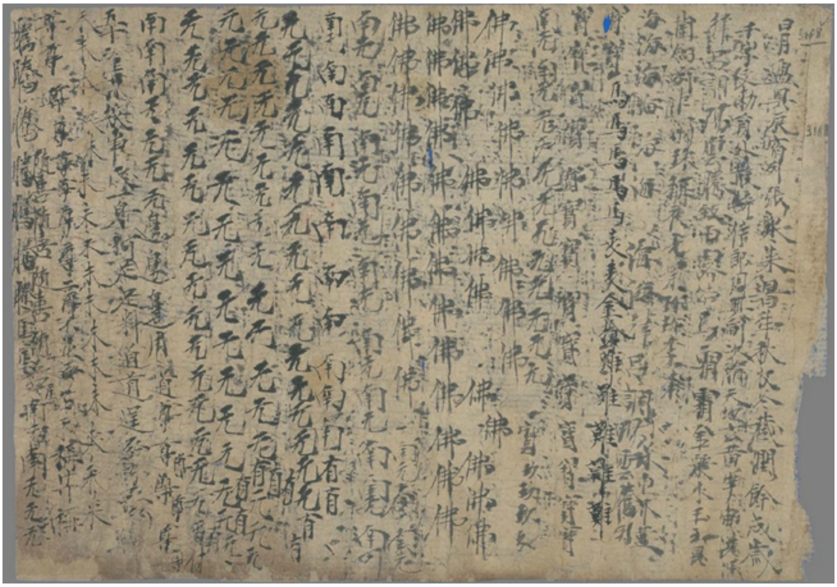


Fig. 8. Writing exercise: a combination of *Qian zi wen* entries and Buddhist terms. (P 3168)

canonical scriptures."[69] At the *xiangxue* the curriculum comprised the "five classics"[70] and the "(writings of) the Hundred Masters."[71] If Buddhist educational activities were directed at all toward the laity, it would be in this world of small and elementary village schools. And in fact, Dunhuang documents do suggest that at the very end of this period (ninth and tenth centuries) such a development had taken place and that lay "students" were somehow attached to Buddhist monasteries.

Many hundreds of Dunhuang texts are provided with colophons of several types, varying from purely religious expressions of faith and of the expected beneficial karmic results of the work of copying to very factual notes specifying the name and status, of the copyists and the date of copying. Because in the vast majority of cases the colophons are attached to Buddhist texts, the persons who have either copied the manuscript, or ordered its copying mostly refer to themselves by typically Buddhist

69 Ibid., 28:996c.
70 Yuanzhen 圓震, 704–790; ibid., 20:838c.
71 Zengren 增忍, 812–871; ibid., 26:977a.



[45] Fig. 9. Writing exercise: a combination of rare variant characters and Buddhist terms. (S 5712)

epithets, such as "the (Buddha's) disciple" lay devotee (*upāsaka, upāsikā*)
[46] "disciple having accepted the (Bodhisattva) vows" "donor" or "sūtra copyist." However, we also find a considerable number of colophons signed by persons who call themselves "student" or "young scholar" (*xueshilang* 學士郎).[72] This appears to be an informal title, somewhat comparable with the popular use of *yuanwai* 員外 to denote an "educated person" in Song times; it does not figure in any of the official descriptions of the Tang school system, but it obviously belongs to the sphere of study, education, and scholarship.

Upon looking more closely at this type of colophon, we find that practically none is attached to a Buddhist scripture: the works copied by such "students" almost invariably are secular. This could be explained by assuming that such manuscripts are external materials that somehow found their way into the (basically Buddhist) Dunhuang cache. This, however, is contradicted by the fact that in more than one-half of the cases the *xueshilang* are associated with specific monasteries in the Dunhuang region and that in some of such colophons monks are mentioned beside the "Young Masters." Some examples follow:

S 395 *Text*: "Dialogue between Confucius and (the boy) Xiang Tuo," *Kongzi Xiang Tuo* 孔子項託.
Colophon, dated 943: "Recorded by Zhang Yanbao 張延保, *xuelang* 學郎 of the Jingtu Monastery 淨土寺."

S 2386 *Text*: "Classic of Filial Piety," *Xiaojing* 孝經.
Colophon, dated 943: "Copying recorded by Gao Qingzi 高清子, *xueshilang* of the Yong'an Monastery 永安寺."

S 213 *Text*: "Ballad of the Swallow," *Yanzi fu* 燕子賦.
Colophon, dated 924: "Copying recorded by Du Yousui 杜有遂, *xueshilang* of the Yong'an Monastery."

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72 In his study on religious societies *she* 社 in Dunhuang, "Tonkō shutsudo 'sha' bunsho no kenkyū 敦煌出土'社'文書の研究" (*Tōhōgakukō* 東方学報 35 (1974):217), Chikusa Masaaki 竺沙雅章 defines the *xue*(*shi*)*lang* as "student copyists" (*tenarai-sei* 手習い生) attached to a monastery; according to him, they were also the people who wrote, often by way of writing exercises, the many casual notes and documents (like club circulars) and other secular texts found among the Dunhuang materials. His view is shared by Victor Mair, who has listed those materials in his "Lay Students and the Making of Written Vernacular Narrative: An Inventory of Tun-huang Manuscripts." *Chinoperl Papers* no. 10 (1981): 5–96. To my knowledge the only study specially devoted to the *xue*(*shi*)*lang* is a short paper by Ogawa Kan'ichi 小川貫弌, "Tonkō butsuji no gakushirō 敦煌仏寺の学士郎," *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū* 龍谷大学論集 400/401 (1973):488–506.

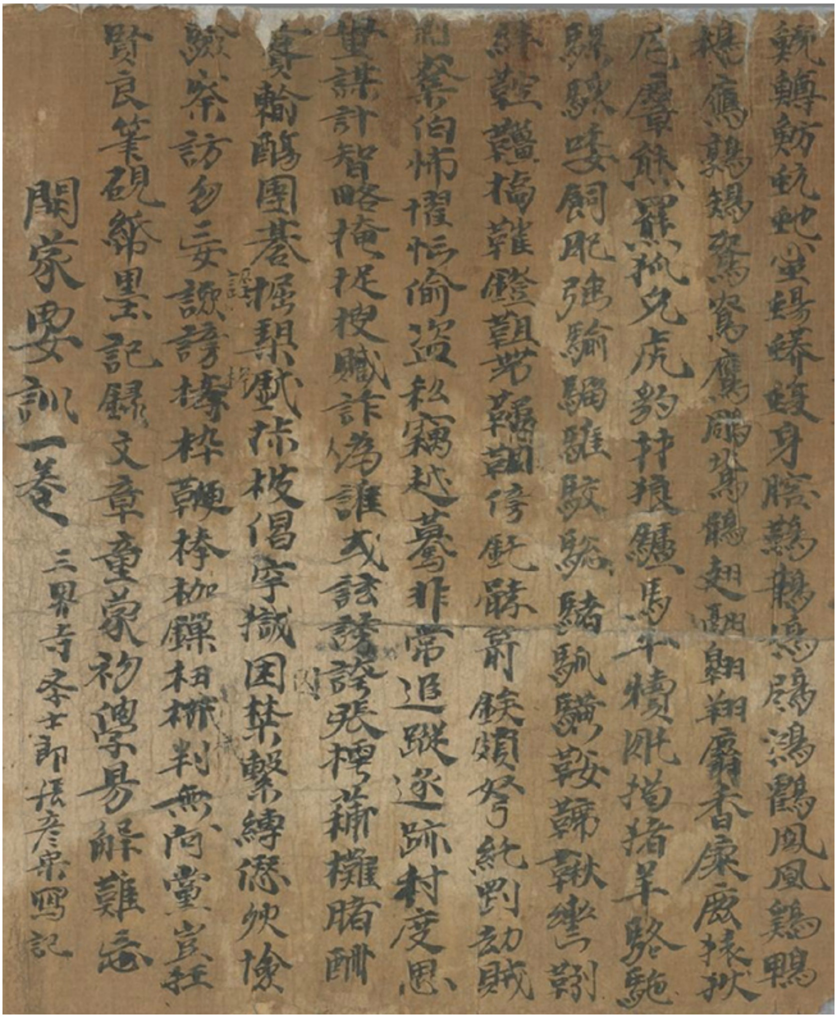
S 3011 *Text*: "The Analects," *Lunyu* (two chapters with *Zhengyi* 正義 Commentary).
Colophon, ". . . by . . ., *xuelang* of the Jinguangming Monastery 金光明寺. . . . In the sixth month of the *mouyin* 某寅 year (probably 858) the monk [*sic*] Ma Yonglong 馬永隆 made a copy in his own hand of one roll of the Analects."

S 3386 *Text*: "Verses on the Classic of Filial Piety," *Yong Xiaojing* 詠孝經.
Colophon dated 942: "Copying recorded by Zhang Fuying, *xueshi* 學士 of the Sanjie Monastery 三界寺."

[47] The educational aspect also appears from some "*xueshilang* colophons" attached to elementary textbooks used in schools, notably the *Kaimeng yaoxun*, which we also have come across in the context of the writing exercises. Thus, P 3189 (Fig. 10), containing the last part of the *Kaimeng yaoxun*, bears a colophon stating that it was copied "by Zhang Yanzong 張彥宗, *xueshilang* of the Sanjie Monastery."

The association of the name of a *xueshilang* with a monastery is very frequent: out of the sixty-seven colophons of this type assembled by Victor Mair (cf. note 72) in no less than thirty-nine cases such lay students are connected with one of nine monasteries in the Dunhuang area. Because practically all such texts are of a secular nature,[73] this suggests a merger between Buddhist and secular education at the grass-roots level. It appears that this type of education comprised students of different levels. Perhaps the more advanced ones (the *xueshilang*?) also acted as teachers: another manuscript of the *Kaimeng yaoxun* (S 705, dated 851) bears a colophon stating that it "was copied by An Wende 安文德, at the dictation of the student (*xuesheng*) Song Wenxian 宋文獻." Another interesting fact is that the dated or datable colophons of this type all are concentrated in a rather short and late period, globally between 850 and 990, We must conclude that the role played by Buddhist monasteries in secular elementary education clearly was a late development that took place in the transitional period covering the last decades of the Tang, the Five Dynasties, and the beginning of the Song. Such a development would, indeed, fit into the general picture of Buddhism in that period, characterized by strong secularizing tendencies.

[73] The only exception seems to be P 3398 (no. 121 in Mair's inventory), a copy of the *Diamond Sūtra* made by a lay student, dated A.D. 943.



[48] Fig. 10. The last part of *Kai meng yao xun.* (P 3189)

Because these colophons point to the existence of a certain type of secular education associated with Buddhist monasteries in the Dunhuang region since the late Tang, we may venture one step further and study the relative frequency of secular texts in the Dunhuang materials; this may provide a clue to the nature and content of the curriculum. A provisional count, (based on the Stein, Pelliot, and Peking collections and the published part of the Leningrad catalog) yields a result, which, indeed, seems significant. The following texts occupy the ten top places:

1. *Lunyu* 論語 (63 entries)
2. *Chunqiu* 春秋 with *Zuo* 左 and *Guliang zhuan* 谷梁傳 (52)
3. Various encyclopedias (*leishu* 類書) of modest size (46)
4. *Qian zi wen* (35)
5. *Taigong jiajiao* (35)[74]
6. The Mao version of the *Odes* 毛詩 (30)
7. The *Book of Documents* 書經 (26)
8. The *Classic of Filial Piety* (25)
9. The *Qieyun* 切韻 and other pronouncing dictionaries (24)
10. Various other dictionaries (*zishu* 字書) (19)

This is, indeed, what we would expect of elementary education: from the basic primer *Qian zi wen* the pupil learns basic characters and standard expressions; the primer *Taigong jiajiao* teaches the pupil moralis-
[49] tic themes in terse and simple language; the Confucian classics clearly emphasize the *Analects* (*Lunyu* and *Xiaojing* also constituted "compulsory memorization" in the official school system); some short encyclopedias and dictionaries are included. The popular and nonofficial character of this type of education is also shown by the fact that these more or less "curricular" texts are embedded in a mass of popular materials: rhapsodies *fu* 賦; simple poems and doggerels (notably of the Wang Fanzhi 王梵志 type); the apocryphal Li Ling 李陵/ Su Wu 蘇武 letters, *bianwen* 變文, model letters, and the like. But what is *not* found in the Dunhuang secular materials is as significant. Apart from the *Wenxuan* 文選 (the classical anthology that in Tang times was used as the standard textbook for stylistic training, and this is well-represented with eighteen entries), all the rest of "higher literature" hardly plays a role at this level. The same is true for the dynastic histories that are only marginally represented. This distribution of titles, combined with the emergence of "students" or "young scholars" associated with Buddhist monasteries, at least gives a vague impression of the type of external education that had developed in the late Tang as a sideline activity of the *saṅgha*, possibly as the result of a merger of the training of semimonastic "postulants" and the community schools (*xiangxue*) below the district level.

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[74] The work entitled "Family Teaching of Tang" is a collection of moralistic utterances expressed in four-syllable verse. In Tang times, it was used as a primer, together with some other popular elementary textbooks, for which see Meng Xiancheng and others, *Zhongguo gudai jiaoyu shi ziliao* 中國古代教育史資料 (Peking: Renmin jiaoyu chuban she, 1961), pp. 177–179.

The fact that in Tang times, and especially in the latter half of that period, Buddhist monasteries all over China had acquired such an educational role is corroborated by numerous references in secular literature. In a detailed study and a monument of erudition,[75] Yan Gengwang 嚴耕望 has listed some two hundred instances in which individuals, many of whom later became prominent as poets, administrators, or generals, in their early years are said to have spent some time, sometimes several years, in Buddhist monasteries. In most cases it is clear that some kind of education or literary training is involved, as appears from the use of terms meaning "to study" or "to receive instruction" (*xue* 學, *xi ye* 習業, *yi ye* 肄業); and, although in general no particulars about the kind of training are given, a few most explicitly state that the education they received in the monastery was not based on Buddhist but on Confucian and secular texts.

Thus, Li Zhi 李騭 who during the 880s served as a courtier and high official, had spent three years in the Huishan Monastery 惠山寺 at Wuxi 無錫 around 830, during which time he had studied various Confucian classics: *Shiji* 史記 and *Hanshu* 漢書; *Zhuangzi* 莊子; *Han Feizi* 韓非子, and the *Lisao* 離騷.[76] In the same monastery somewhat earlier, around 800, the future poet Li Shen 李紳 had studied at the age of fourteen or fifteen; later he returned to the Huishan monastery for ten years, living in a monk's
[50] cell and copying some five hundred rolls of "classics and history."[77] The most informative passage deals with a certain Duan Wei 段維, who in the second half of the ninth century became a poet of modest renown. In his youth Duan Wei had been illiterate. He later regretted his lack of literary skill, and when he heard that the Buddhist monastery on Mt. Zhongtiao 中條 (in Shanxi 山西)[78] was an important center of study—a "students' lair" (*xuesheng yuansou* 學生淵藪)—he went there to be instructed. At first the students despised him and did not want to give him canonical texts to be memorized. However, after he had amazed them with his ability to memorize secular poetry and a rhyming dictionary, they transmitted

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[75] "Tangren xiye shanlin siyuan zhi fengshang 唐人習業山林寺院之風尚," in his *Tangshi yanjiu conggao* 唐史研究叢稿 (Hong Kong, 1971), pp. 267–424.

[76] *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文 (reprint, Taipei: Ti Huishan si shi xu 1961), 724:11b: "Preface to the Poems on the Huishan Monastery," *Ti Huishan si shi xu* 題惠山寺詩序, dated AD 869.

[77] Ibid., 816:3b–4a: "Note on Our Family Temple in the Huishan Monastery" (*Huishan si jiashan ji* 惠山寺家山記) by Li shen's grandson Li Jun 李濬, dated 879.

[78] Probably the Wangu Monastery 萬古寺 on Mt. Zhongtiao, where according to Tang Zhiyan 唐摭言 (SBBY 四部備要, 7:1b), the future general Xu Shang 徐商 in the early ninth century spent some time.

(*shou*) the *Xiaojing* to him. After that he was able to become widely read in the Classics and secular literature within six months. The text explicitly says that only after having completed this crash-course in literary education did he leave the monastery.[79]

The examples given by Yan Gengwang, and especially the episode about Duan Wei, are instructive in several ways. First, they show that the external educational activities of monasteries, of which some material remains among the Dunhuang documents, were not limited to the northwestern frontier region; the cases mentioned are spread throughout almost the whole of China. Second, in the case of Duan Wei no mention is made of studying under a particular "master"; we get the impression of a kind of community of "students," *shusheng* 書生, from whom Duan Wei gets his instruction, which reminds us of the role of the *xueshilang* in the Dunhuang material. Third, the texts clearly show that young people who studied in Buddhist (and, occasionally, also in Daoist) monasteries did so to prepare themselves for the official examinations, and in many instances this informal study is explicitly related to the students' humble background and/or poverty. Finally, it is striking that most examples date from the ninth century, which again agrees with the information from Dunhuang presented above.

Yan Gengwang suggests a direct link between the practice of studying in monasteries and the rise of Confucian academies (*shuyuan* 書院) in Song times. This interesting observation deserves to be followed by further research. However, at this stage the available information is too scanty and too unspecific to regard it as more than a promising but as yet untested working hypothesis. The only form of institutionalization of this type of education explicitly mentioned a few times is called 'charitable schools" (*yixue* 義學), a term that (like *shuyuan* itself) strongly suggests a secular origin: an institution based on voluntary contributions and inspired by feelings of "civic duty."[80]

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[79] Tang Zhiyan, SBBY (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1936), pp. 5b–6a.

[80] The term *yixue* is in itself ambivalent because in context unrelated to any educational institution it occasionally means "(scriptural) exegesis" as a scholastic specialization. Thus, *XGSZ*, 25:538c, states that among the disciples of Famin 法敏 (578–645) no less than seventy "monks (specialized in) exegesis," *yixue shamen* 義學沙門. In one or the two cases mentioned by Yan Gengwang *Tangshi yanjiu conggao*, (p. 374) it seems that the text refers to this kind of *yixue*: according to *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 177:4597, the chief minister Pei Xiu (?787–800), when serving as military governor of Fengxiang 鳳翔 (S. W. Shaanxi 陝西) in 860, often went to the Buddhist monasteries in that region for learned discussions because "there were many *yixue*; his teachers (all) were monks." Because this took place at the very end of Pei Xiu 裴秀's career, when he was in

[51] *The Production and Distribution of Written Materials*

Finally, we may pose the question: "To what extent has Buddhism contributed to general literacy and reading habits through the production and spread of texts?" It is a vast and complicated subject, and I shall limit myself to a few general remarks on three aspects: (1) the formation, size, and function of monastic libraries; (2) the distribution and circulation of Buddhist texts outside the monastery; and (3) the modest role played by printing in pre-Song times.

Monastic Libraries constitute another area largely unknown except for the evidence of Dunhuang materials. The large metropolitan monasteries patronized by the court possessed large collections of Buddhist texts. At the center, the mass of available texts was, moreover, constantly enlarged by state-sponsored translation activities and the production of Chinese scholastic works that were offered to the court, with the request that these texts be "entered into the Canon," *ru zang* 入藏. But in this chapter I shall not touch upon that large-scale and well-organized production of new texts. It is a process that, as regards size, level of organization, and degree of state supervision, reached its apogee in the early Sung. For my purpose it is noteworthy that in some cases, especially in early Tang times, Buddhist texts were consciously distributed from the center throughout the empire. In 648 copies of Xuanzang's 玄奘 voluminous translation of the *Yogācāra-siddhi-śāstra* were sent by imperial edict to a great number of prefectures,[81] and in 689 empress Wu ordered that the *Dayun jing* 大雲經 (a text she "promoted" for political reasons) should be spread throughout
[52] the realm,[82] Emperor Xuanzong did the same in 736 with the *Diamond*

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his seventies, it is clear that the term does not refer to any institution of elementary secular education, and I take it that also in this case it simply meant "(scholastic) exegetes." The second example given by Yan Gengwang is also of questionable relevance: it refers to the fact that as a young man Zongmi 宗密 (780–841) studied in the *yixue yuan* 義學院 in Suizhou 遂州 (present-day Suining 遂寧 in Sichuan 四川), a flourishing center of Confucian studies. There he in AD 807 met the Chan master Daoyuan 道圓 "who in the course of his travels had come to this prefecture." Zongmi was deeply impressed by him and immediately became his disciple (*Yuanjue jing dashu chao* 圓覺經大疏鈔, j. 1B *Zoku-zōkyō* I.14, p. 222b). Because this meeting took place when Zongmi was impressing himself in Confucian studies (in fact, according to his biography, *SGSZ*, 6.741c, this encounter precisely brought about his conversion to Buddhism), the "Yixue Hall" at Suizhou undoubtedly was a Confucian school, and there is no reason to assume that it had any relation with Buddhist monastic institutions.

81 T 2154 *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, 8:559c; see also T 2053 *Da Ci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan* 大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 (biography of Xuanzang, by Huili 慧立 and Yancong 彥悰, ca. 665), 6:256a.

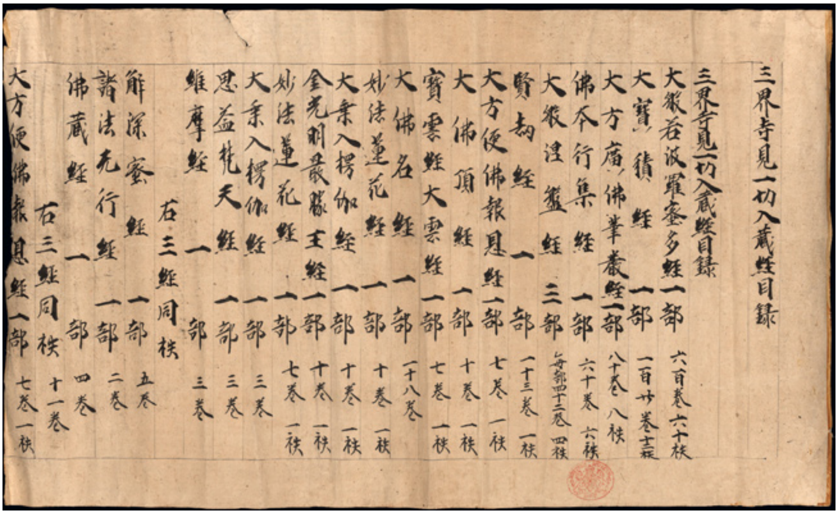
82 T 2126 *Sengshi lüe*, 3:248c; T 2035 *Fozu tongji*, 39:369c: *Jiu Tangshu*, 6:121.

Scripture" (*Vajracchedikā*, *Jingang jing* 金剛經) together with a commentary in his own hand.[83] In one case, the distribution was made for the benefit of the wordly authorities. When in 639 another attempt was made to "sift" (*shatai* 沙汰) the *saṅgha* by secularization of all undesirable elements, emperor Taizong 太宗 provided all provincial governors with copies of the *Yijiao jing* 遺教經, a short text in which the essential duties and norms of behavior of the *saṅgha* are explained; and consequently it could be used by the authorities as a guideline in dealing with the clergy.[84]

However, as soon as one leaves the center, information on Buddhist collections becomes very scarce. The lacuna is only partially filled by the Dunhuang materials: about fifty lists of titles refer to specific monastic libraries, but none of these contains a complete inventory; most lists are fragmentary, or are "lists of new acquisitions" or "lists of lacking volumes." However, some documents, like S 3624 (Fig. 11). a fragment of the inventory of the Sanjie monastery, certainly evoke the picture of large and well-kept libraries. Another document, P 3010, entitled "List of new manuscripts of canonical scriptures, year by year added (to the collection) of the Sanjie Monastery" (*Sanjie si linian xinxie zangjing mulu* 三界寺歷年新寫藏經目錄), suggests great activity and considerable growth (Fig. 12). In many cases the new acquisitions only were *parts* of scriptures. This way of library building probably was a general phenomenon outside the Dunhuang region as well. Handwritten texts were very expensive, and in most cases neither the monasteries themselves nor the donors who ordered the copying of a text as a "good work" could afford to produce complete copies of lengthy texts. Most Dunhuang scriptures are incomplete because piety had its limits; the donors mostly only provided single rolls, or even single sections. In this way, the monasteries had to "scrape their libraries together" by collecting parts of texts; monastic libraries therefore appear to have suffered from both extreme duplication and structural gaps. The several "lists of incomplete scriptures" (*quejing mu* 缺經目, *qian zangjing mu* 欠藏經目) are not the result of neglect or theft but of the method of acquisition itself.

Professional copyists were attached to the monastery; they probably produced manuscripts by order of both the monastery and outside donors. One list of copyists attached to the Jinguangming Monastery (S 2711,

[83] *SGSZ*, 14:795b (biography of Xuanyan 玄儼, 674–742).
[84] T 2035 *Fozu tongji*, 39:365b; cf. also T 2051 *Tang hufa shamen Falin biezhuan* 唐護法沙門法琳別傳, 2:204a.



三界寺見一切入藏經目錄
三界寺見一切入藏經目錄
大般若波羅蜜多經一部 六百卷 六十帙
大寶積經一部 一百廿卷 十二帙
大方廣佛華嚴經一部 八十卷 八帙
佛本行集經一部 六十卷 六帙
大般涅槃經三部 每部四十三卷 四帙
賢劫經一部 一十三卷 一帙
大方便佛報恩經一部 七卷 一帙
大佛頂經一部 十卷 一帙
寶雲經大雲經一部 七卷 一帙
大佛名經一部 一十八卷
妙法蓮花經一部 十卷 一帙
大乘入楞伽經一部 十卷 一帙
金光明最勝王經一部 十卷 一帙
妙法蓮花經一部 七卷 一帙
大乘入楞伽經一部 三卷
思益梵天經一部 三卷
維摩經一部 三卷
右三經同帙
解深密經一部 五卷
諸法無行經一部 二卷
佛藏經一部 四卷
右三經同帙 十一卷
大方便佛報恩經一部 七卷 一帙

[53] Fig. 11. A fragment of the inventory to the Sanjie monastery library. (S 3624)

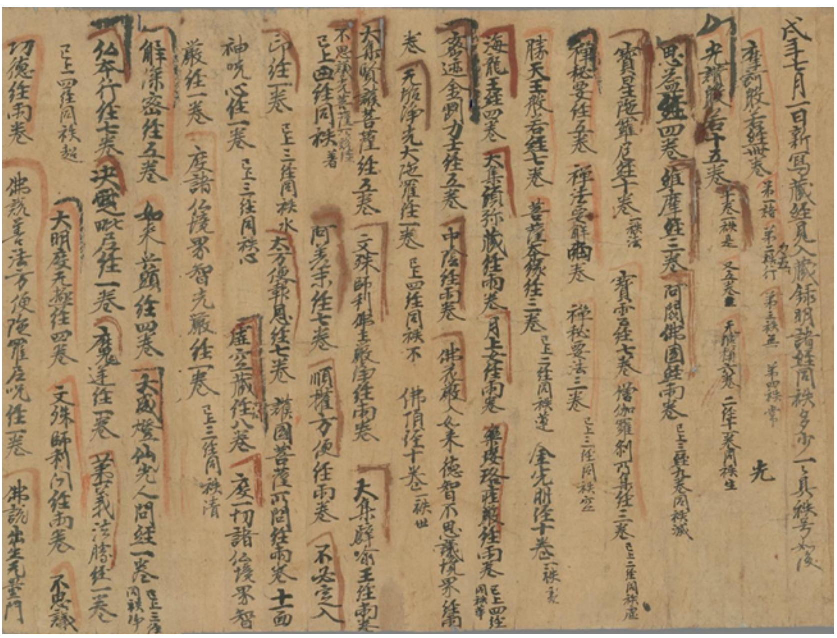
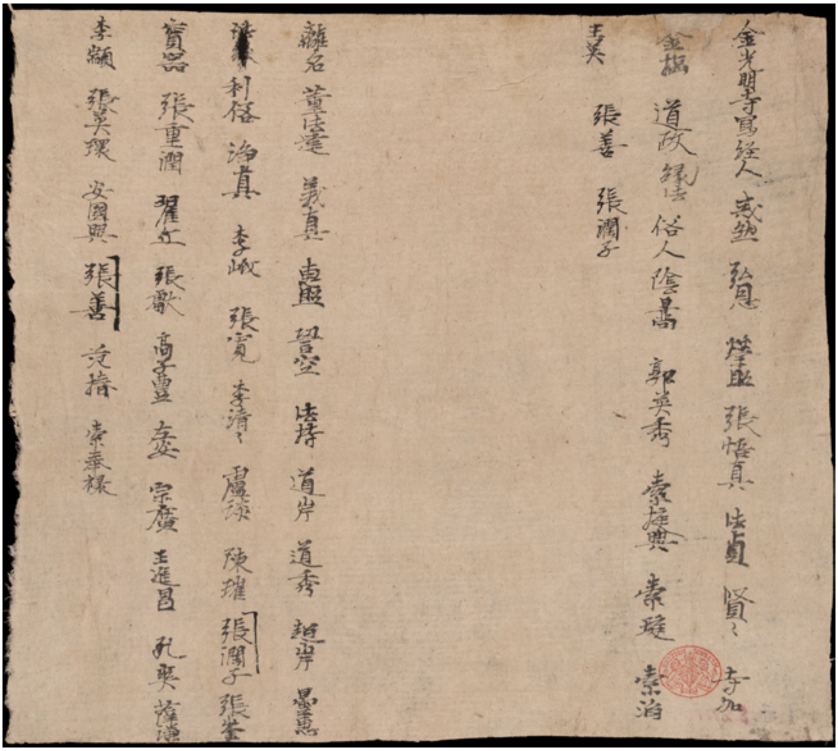


Fig. 12. A list of additions to the inventory of the Sanjie monastery library. (P 3010)



[54] Fig. 13. Copyists attached to the Jinguangming Monastery. (S 2711)

Jinguangming si xiejing renming 金光明寺寫經人名) shows a staff of no less than fifty-five persons, both monks and laymen (Fig. 13). It is interesting to note that of the twenty-seven lay copyists ten are surnamed Zhang—apparently they were members of a family specialized in this trade.

Circulation of Buddhist texts outside the monastery is another topic about which I can speak only in general terms because specific information, at least for Tang times, is lacking. The spread of at least certain popular texts among the lay public must have been stimulated by the common Mahāyāna belief that the pious recital of scriptures is an act of faith with positive karmic consequences. The stereotyped passages, found in many Mahāyāna *sūtras*, list the ways in which a believer can show his piety toward the scripture in question, very often including "reading aloud" (*nian*) and "chanting" (*song*), and in later times literate lay believers certainly did so, either individually or collectively.

I must, therefore, assume that also in Tang times Buddhist texts spread outside the monastery and that in this way Buddhism must have contributed to literacy, or rather to the practice of reading. However, the level of literacy was no doubt very low and scriptures did not necessarily have to be read: the text in itself was a sacred object. This “amulet” function is of course even more evident in the innumerable magic formulas (*mantra*), short tracts, and inscribed pictures that were produced in great quantities. Mainly in this sector did the technique of printing have its greatest impact.

The *art of printing*, undoubtedly the most momentous Buddhist contribution to the spread of literacy (and hence, indirectly, to education), primarily allowed mass-production of texts for the lay public. However,
[55] it is a remarkable able fact that the practice of printing Buddhist texts, in spite of its obvious advantages, spread very slowly. In the Dunhuang cache (closed at the beginning of the eleventh century) the number of printed texts is almost negligible: of the more than eight thousand items in the Stein collection only twenty are printed, and the published part of the catalogue of the Pelliot collection (one thousand items) only mentions two. I must conclude that even after at least a quarter of a millennium the role of the art of printing in the production and spread of Buddhist texts still was absolutely marginal. The extreme scarcity of printed items in the Dunhuang collections—mostly short texts and formulas—shows that the new technique was still in its infant state and that in the period covered by this chapter its influence must have been minimal.

Conclusions

From my discussion of Buddhism and education, I would draw a number of conclusions. In “Buddhist education” the whole complex of study and teaching was, by definition, aimed at religious instruction; education, as practiced by the *saṅgha*, was subordinated to the religious message. In a certain sense it was thereby limited in its scope. On the other hand, however, it was directed to all people, without distinction of age, class, or sex. Because the message was intended “for the benefit of all beings,” the ideal of religious instruction was, in principle, universal.

One central element in religious training was scriptural study and the spread of sacred texts. Countless passages in Mahāyāna *sūtras* extol the merits of persons, male and female alike (*shan nanzi shan nüren* 善男子

善女人, the equivalent of our "brothers and sisters"), who read, recited, studied, and copied the scriptures.

In China, the ideal of scriptural study was reinforced by the influence of the Confucian concept of "recruitment of talent"; its most characteristic expression was the development of clerical examinations under the Tang. In this way, education within the *saṅgha*, and especially textual memorization and study, came to contain an element of compulsoriness and competition that must have raised the educational level of the *saṅgha* as a whole. In this way, the training of the monk (about nuns almost nothing is known) in China could develop into a religious educational system in its own right.

In the fourth century a small vanguard of "scholar-monks" developed who were the bearers of the great tradition of Chinese Buddhism; in the course of the sixth century this top layer within the clergy developed into a secondary elite, an "alternative intelligentsia." However, it remained a tiny minority within the *saṅgha*. For the average monk, training led to a modest level of literary skill based on the memorization of some popular scriptures, notably the *Lotus sūtra*. In the case of young postulants or novices, this was preceded by training in elementary literacy. But even so, this educational level must have been superior to that of the general [56] population. Inside the monastery monks also received some training in secular literature, probably because it was considered indispensible in their relations with the outer world. The materials again suggest a very modest program, with emphasis on the most elementary texts.

In late Tang times, Buddhist monasteries engaged in some kind of external education at the grass-roots level, probably as the result of a fusion between the semimonastic postulants' training and the local community schools (*xiangxue*).

The production and spread of religious texts must also have contributed to the lay public's level of literacy, but owing to the scarcity of information it is unknown to what extent. The process was no doubt much accelerated by the use of printing, but in the tenth century the influence of this technique was still marginal.

Like other universal religions, Buddhism potentially is able to play a dominating role in education; in "Buddhist countries" like Thailand and Burma it has fully developed that potentiality. In medieval China, environmental and cultural factors prevented it from doing so. The main inhibiting factor was the dominance of the Confucian concept of education. In the hypothetical case that Confucian education strictly limited itself to the training of an elite of administrators, it is conceivable that Bud-

dhism would have developed an educational system of its own. But, as I remarked in the beginning, the Confucian ideal of "moral transformation" was by no means limited to the "selection of talent" and the formation of a top layer of scholar-officials. Confucianism had its own brand of moral "education for the masses," in which, in principle, the *saṅgha* had no role to play. However, materials show that the *saṅgha* as an alternative intelligentsia with a certain intellectual status and a certain degree of literacy education did manage to play a role through informal channels and at the grass-roots level.

In the late Tang, even more lay students were attracted to Buddhist monasteries for secular studies. Judging from the number "*xueshilang* documents" from Dunhuang and considering the fact that probably only a tiny fraction of such materials has been preserved, we must conclude that in early Song times many thousands of people (all over China, as is shown by the data collected by Yan Gengwang) had received at least part of their education in monastic surroundings. It is quite possible that in that world of "parochial schools" (as they are called by Victor Mair), where the young students were confronted with both the Confucian and the Buddhist traditions, the study of the Classics was more open, less tradition-bound, and less orthodox than in the official schools where Confucianism was encapsulated, so to speak, within its own universe. In this way, at a social level far below that of the master-minds of Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism may have contributed to breaking down the barriers of Confucian orthodoxy: in its humble and inconspicuous way, it may have created a space in which Neo-Confucianism eventually could operate.

© Skorupski, Tadeusz, ed., *The Buddhist Heritage* (Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1985): 117–128.

THE IMPACT OF BUDDHISM ON CHINESE CULTURE IN AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

I. *The Geographical Setting and Its Consequences*

Transmission through Central Asia

From earliest times, the Chinese have been deeply aware of the fact that Buddhism, unlike the indigenous traditions of Confucianism and Daoism, was a doctrine (*jiao* 教) or a method (*fa* 法) of salvation that had been brought to China from the outside, from regions far beyond China's cultural frontiers. To Buddhist believers, it led to the concept of India as a holy country—a centre of spiritual authority outside China (which, incidentally, constituted a major innovation in Chinese thought). To the opponents of Buddhism, it was an argument to brand the foreign doctrine as a 'barbarian' *Fremdkörper*, adapted to the intellectual level of primitive natives, and therefore unfit to become part of Chinese civilization. Thus, the factor of geographical distance between China and the homeland of Buddhism created a lasting, basic polarization: from the very beginning, being a Buddhist (and, even more explicitly, becoming a monk) implied the willingness to accept patterns of belief and behaviour whose non-Chinese origin were never forgotten, just as anti-Buddhist attitudes have always been coupled with a clear sense of Chinese superiority and exclusivity, and consequently have reinforced the tradition of Sino-centrism.

In fact, the geographical situation in which the diffusion of Buddhism in China from the first to the early eighth century took place is far more complex than this single opposition 'China versus India' would suggest. Buddhism had reached China through Central Asia, after having spread through the oasis kingdoms that had sprung up along the 'Silk Road' since the beginning of our era, and its propagation was deeply affected by the conditions prevailing both in the transitional zone and at either end of the transcontinental caravan route.

The Silk Road constituted the link between an ever-changing configuration of states and empires. In its earliest phase—which coincides with the first two centuries of the diffusion of Buddhism into China up to the late third century—the western reaches were dominated by three major

[118] political powers: the *Kuṣāṇa* (Indo-Scythian, or *Yuezhi* 月支) empire which, from its base in North-west India, dominated the Indo-Iranian borderlands from present-day Bukhara to Afghanistan, and the secondary powers of Parthia and Sogdiana. From this general area, cultural influences from various centres spread along the Silk Road, giving rise to hybrid civilizations in the various oasis kingdoms as far east as *Loulan* 樓蘭 (Kroraina in the Kharoṣṭhī documents), only some four hundred miles from the Chinese border. Apart from some inter-oasis trade and a profitable export of jade, the Central Asian kingdoms may have mainly thrived on the continental transit trade, moving silk, lacquer, and cast-iron utensils from east to west, and precious stones, glassware, aromatics and horses in the opposite direction. In the first centuries of our era, they became independent centres of Buddhism, probably as the result of the missionary activities of itinerant monks who travelled with the trade caravans, and it was from these centres, as well as from India and the Indo-Iranian borderlands, that Buddhism spread to China.

At the other end of the Silk Road, the process may have been stimulated by the periodic expansion of Chinese power far into Central Asia, but we should not overestimate the importance of this for our subject. The waves of Chinese imperial expansion were sporadic and never long-lasting: two periods of Chinese military overlordship in the first century BCE and in the early second century CE; a period of Tuoba-Wei dominance in the late fifth century; and Chinese military rule in the first half of the Tang dynasty. To some extent, Chinese rule may have facilitated travelling, but in general our sources show that the influx of Buddhism went on as a steady process, which also took place in periods when there was no question of Chinese rule in the 'Western Regions'.

However, it was always a minimal influx through a single channel fed by very different sources. In India and its adjoining regions, Buddhism had typically spread by 'contact diffusion': once a local *sīmā* ('alms circuit') had been established and grown to its optimal size (corresponding to the number of mendicant monks that could be borne by a local productive community), monks would move on to establish new *vihāras* in adjoining territories. Thus Buddhism branched out from an ever-increasing number of centres, filling the territory in a homogeneous way. In China, sheer distance and physical geography combined to produce a completely different type of diffusion. In the first place, it was an immensely slow process: Buddhism 'filtered in', and it took some four centuries to spread to all major regions of China and to penetrate at all social levels. It was not

absorbed *in toto*, branching out into China from an adjoining territory, but in a fragmented and piecemeal way. This has led to a certain regionalization in Chinese Buddhism, particularly in its formative phase. In general, the centres in the North and North-west remained in direct contact with
[119] the Western Regions. For many centuries, the most prominent foreign missionaries were mainly active in the North, and it was also there that most Chinese versions of Buddhist scriptures were produced. The fact that Buddhism was readily patronized by the 'barbarian' dynasties—the non-Chinese conquerers who ruled the northern half of China from the early fourth century till 589 CE—was largely the result of this geographical factor, which brought about a clear awareness of the foreign origin of Buddhism. In the southern parts of China, which in those centuries were ruled by a succession of indigenous Chinese dynasties without direct communications with the Western Regions, we find the development of a much more Sinicized type of Buddhism, less concerned with translation, monastic organization and ritual, and more focused upon scriptural studies and the interpretation of Buddhist ideas in terms of traditional Chinese philosophy and religion. After the reunification of the empire under the Sui (589 CE), these two main streams of Chinese Buddhism amalgamated; their mixture heralded the rise of typically Chinese schools and the golden age of Buddhism under the Sui and Tang dynasties (589–906 CE).

Another important consequence was the fact that China for centuries absorbed Buddhism from different centres representing various types of Buddhism. This is most pronounced in the early period: out of the eighteen foreign missionaries known to have been active in China in the second and third centuries CE, four were Indians, four Indo-Scythians, three Parthians, four Sogdians, and three Khotanese. This diversity of regional origin, coupled with the fact that the process lasted centuries, during which in various regions outside China new schools and movements evolved, has resulted in an extremely complicated picture. From the beginning, the Chinese were confronted with Buddhism not as one homogeneous and fairly consistent system, but rather as a bewildering mass of diverse (and occasionally even mutually contradictory) teachings: thousands of scriptures of both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna origin; monastic rules of five different schools; a great variety of scholastic treatises; sectarian texts and tantric rituals. It was precisely this diversity that stimulated Chinese religious leaders to explore new ways to eliminate the contradictions and to reduce the Buddhist message to one basic truth transcending all differences. Various methods were applied to "make Buddhism whole

again": by stressing the concept of 'graded revelation' and levels of truth', which became the basis of the great and highly original scholastic systems of medieval Chinese Buddhism; by focusing on devotionalism (as in Pure Land Buddhism) or, in a most radical reaction, by rejecting the validity of all scriptural teaching and reducing Buddhism to a direct, wordless, intuitive way to Enlightenment (as in *Chan* Buddhism).

Finally, the factor of the sheer distance also had its linguistic consequences. Throughout history, only very few Chinese are known to have had any appreciable knowledge of Sanskrit. On the other hand, the for-
[120] eign missionaries who came to China were seldom fluent in Chinese. The production of Buddhist texts in Chinese was typically the work of a 'translation team', the foreign master reciting the text and making, mostly with the help of a bilingual interpreter, a very crude translation, that was written down and afterwards revised and 'polished' by Chinese assistants. It is easy to see the hazards of misunderstanding inherent in such a procedure. Buddhist concepts lost much of their original flavour once they were expressed in Chinese terms. The linguistic barrier remained a formidable obstacle to a direct understanding of Buddhism as it had developed outside China, and direct communication with Indian centres of learning—or, indeed, with any Buddhist centre outside China—was too incidental to change the overall picture.

However, the linguistic situation also had its positive side. Somewhere in the third century BCE, long before the introduction of Buddhism, the language used in writing had become divorced from the spoken idiom and had crystallized into a common 'standard literary Chinese'. When the first scriptures were translated into Chinese in the second century CE, the translators and their Chinese assistants naturally made use of that medium, even though the social *milieu* in which they operated and the content of the scriptures led to certain adaptations. However, once translated into that peculiar idiom—a kind of semi-literary Chinese that in turn became standardized as a Chinese scriptural language around the fifth century CE—the special nature of the Chinese ideographic script (that transcends all differences in local dialects) made it possible for any translated text to be read all over China, and to be interpreted in many ways, without external guidance.

The Sea Route

Until the period of profound economic and social change that transformed her in the ninth and tenth centuries, China was oriented towards

the continent, and maritime relations played only a marginal role. The diffusion of Buddhism by and large took place before the era in which the economic potentialities of the South China coast were exploited. Until the tenth century, overseas trade that linked present-day Canton with the harbours of Southeast Asia, India and the Persian Gulf appears to have been largely monopolized by foreign—notably Arab and Persian—traders, and for many centuries the diffusion of Buddhism along that route played a secondary role. The fact that since the late seventh century the maritime connection, which linked the South China coast with Sumatra, Tāmralipti and Sri Lanka, became more important is due to a negative factor: the Arab conquests that obstructed the overland route to China, with the result that Chinese pilgrims chose to go by sea. It was a last phase, one that found its natural conclusion with the disappearance of Buddhism from India and Central Asia, which put an end to fresh impulses and to
[121] the activities of foreign missionaries in China.

II. *Buddhism and Chinese Culture: Obstacles and Channels of Acceptance*

1. In general, the spread of Buddhism beyond the confines of its homeland and into other, non-Indianized regions of Asia, gave rise to two different types of diffusion which I have labelled type A (Buddhism accepted as an integral part of a large complex of cultural borrowing: Indianization or Sinicization), and type B (Buddhism being introduced as such, into a complex and highly developed civilization).

In the case of type A, Buddhism is accepted in the context of total cultural change (often as a result of a conscious policy followed by the ruling élite), the introduction of Buddhism being embedded in a larger complex, including political and economic reforms, the introduction of arts and sciences of foreign origin, and in some cases even the art of writing. Clear examples are the acceptance of Buddhism as an integral element of a process of Indianization in parts of Southeast Asia; and the adoption of Buddhism (in its Chinese forms) as one basic element in the Sinicization of Korea and Japan. In the case of type B, Buddhism is, from the very beginning, faced with a highly developed civilization, dominated by pre-existing, well-articulated systems of ideology and/or religion, and by clearly delineated political and social ideas and norms, especially at the level of the cultured élite. In such cases, there can be no question of total cultural change introduced from above; Buddhism does not supersede, but has to try to find its place (at first no more than a marginal one) in

the recipient civilization, and in the shadow of the dominant ideology and its institutions. It is not imposed, but filters up from below. In the case of type A, from the start Buddhism is directly associated with the ruling élite and their policy; consequently, the process may be sudden and spectacular. With type B, the opposite is true: the diffusion starts from below, and it may last centuries before it succeeds in penetrating to the top. China clearly belongs to type B: Buddhism started to penetrate into China around the beginning of our era as a marginal 'exotic' creed operating at grass-roots level, and it spread among the population for about three centuries, until it at last reached the level of the dominant minority—the scholar-official class, the aristocratic élite, and the court—around the middle of the fourth century.

2. At the level of that élite, Buddhism is faced with formidable obstacles: the essentially pragmatic and secular world-view of the Confucian tradition; the 'political theology' of the Mandate of Heaven; a totalistic conception of imperial authority, also in the religious sphere; the central role of the family (and the moral code based on it); and an outspoken Sinocentric attitude towards anything foreign or 'barbaric'. Below the level of the dominant Confucian ideology, Buddhism was also faced with the opposition voiced by its main religious competitor, Daoism—a creed
[122] that, albeit with another orientation, also pursued goals that were concrete and tangible: harmony with the forces of Nature, and the prolongation of bodily existence.

3. Thus there existed strong counter-forces, both doctrinal and institutional—the latter directed mainly against the existence of the saṅgha as an unworldly, economically parasitic, and politically independent body. Under that pressure, Buddhism was forced to adapt itself: doctrinally, by defining its role *vis-à-vis* Confucian ideology and by insisting upon its 'practical benefit' for state and society; socially, by emphasizing the importance of the laity and of charitable activities; and institutionally, by integrating the saṅgha into the political system as guild-like organization of ritual experts. By the end of the medieval period (ninth to tenth centuries CE), these processes have run their course: Buddhism has found its well-defined (but modest) place in the Chinese world, expressing itself in religious ideas, ritual practices and institutional structures that have become completely Sinicized. It also marks the end of Buddhism as a great creative force in Chinese civilization.

4. In spite of these pressures, Buddhism did become a very important factor in Chinese culture, both spiritually and materially. The counter-forces were to some extent balanced by positive factors stimulating its spread:

(a) One of these was political polycentrism, including non-Chinese dynasties, in early medieval China: 'barbarian' rule in large parts of northern China in the period of disunity (311–589 CE). For various reasons, some non-Chinese ruling houses patronize Buddhism; in the Chinese southern court circles, the status of Confucianism (the ideology of imperial unification, hence the doctrine that had failed) suffers a temporary setback.

(b) In medieval China, Confucianism still constitutes the ideology of an extremely small élite, and the mass of the population has not yet been 'Confucianized'. At grass-roots level, Buddhism does not meet strong resistence from the side of popular religion. At the base, Buddhist ideas (karma and reincarnation; benign and fierce dieties; devotionalism), practices (charity; exorcism; rituals performed for the well-being of deceased ancestors), and institutions (lay associations; monastic estates with their labour force of 'temple serfs'; the monastery as a centre of commercial activities, and as a provider of basic education; the convent as a refuge for surplus females) permeate society.

(c) Even at the level of the cultured élite, some Buddhist ideas and ideals merge with traditional concepts: monastic life and traditional 'retired scholarship'; Buddhist rejection of the world and Daoist withdrawal into Nature and, in some circles, even a high appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of Buddhism (notably in painting and architecture). The trend was reinforced by the emergence, within the saṅgha, of a vanguard of highly cultured 'scholar-monks'—an alternative intel-
[123] ligentsia that lent respectability to the church.

(d) At court, Buddhism is regularly patronized (or at least maintained) not only for reasons of imperial piety, but also, and sometimes primarily, as a magical protection for the dynasty, the state, and society.

III. *The Main Periods*

1. *The embryonic phase*, from the first appearance of Buddhism in China (mid-first century CE) to c. 300 CE. This is a poorly documented stage, during which Buddhism only plays a marginal role in the mainstream of religious and intellectual life.

2. *The formative phase*, c. 300–589 CE. A phase which is politically conterminous with the period of political disunity and 'barbarian' rule in northern China. It sees the penetration of Buddhism, both in the North and in the South, into the dominant élites, and the development of court

Buddhism. The large-scale translation of Buddhist text continues, sponsored by the rulers; occasional anti-Buddhist movements also occur. By the end of this period, the stage was set for the rise of indigenous Chinese Buddhist 'schools'.

3. *The phase of independent growth*, conterminous with the second era of imperial unification (Sui and Tang dynasties, 589–906 CE) the 'high Middle Ages' of Chinese history. Indigenous Chinese sects or schools are formed, and some Indian forms of Buddhism (notably Yogācāra and Tantra) are transplanted in China. The prosperity of the Buddhist church is a notable feature, coupled with a growing tendency on the part of the state authorities to curb its growth; in 845 CE a severe repression is instigated that is commonly regarded as the beginning of the gradual decline of Buddhism in China.

4. *Buddhism in later imperial* (*or 'pre-modern'*) *China*, from the tenth to the nineteenth centuries. In the urbanized and bureaucratized 'gentry' society, the status of a revived and expanded (Neo-)Confucianism becomes paramount. Buddhism does not decline in quantitative terms, but it gradually loses the support of the cultured élite, and is increasingly reduced to a popular religion. Only *Chan* Buddhism goes on to exert a limited appeal in intellectual circles.

5. *Buddhism in the modern era, from around 1880 to the present.* The attempt to revive and upgrade Buddhism remains a small and rather élitist movement. In the twentieth century, and especially since the 1920's, Buddhism is increasingly exposed to the combined pressure of nationalism, modernization, and Marxism-Leninism.

IV. *Stratification*

It is impossible to generalize about 'Chinese Buddhism', or about its
[124] impact on Chinese culture *in toto.* The impact has taken place at various levels, and at each level both the input and the response have been different. We can distinguish at least four levels (in terms of social stratification, education and doctrinal articulation).

1. *Popular Buddhism*, marked by a strong tendency towards syncretism, devotionalism, and simple ritualism. It is not based on scriptural studies; the creed is largely propagated orally, and at village level it is centred around the local temple or shrine, with its own religious lore, and served by local, semi-literate (and usually not fully-ordained) village monks.

Religious life is normally organized in lay associations. Occasionally it takes the form of sectarian movements, sometimes of a messianic nature. At this level, Buddhism has persisted till modern times.

2. *The Buddhism of the clerical élite*, concentrated in the largest monasteries, that are patronized by the élite and constitute the main centres of scholastic activity and 'high Buddhist culture'. In this *milieu* we find the development of the major 'schools' of medieval Chinese Buddhism. Apart from *Chan* and the more popular *Jingtu* 淨土 ('Pure Land') Buddhism, the impact of these school traditions outside the monastic sphere has been very limited. In later imperial times, this sector has declined most severely, in terms of creativity, productivity, and social status.

3. *The Buddhism of the cultured laity*, associated with the clerical élite mentioned above, but in general not with any particular scholastic movement. The main sponsors of the Buddhist church, they are motivated by a mixture of devotionalism and literary and artistic interest. Even in medieval times the cultured lay devotees only constitute a small part of the dominant élite as a whole. In conjunction with the clerical élite, lay Buddhism at this level has declined sharply in later imperial times, when the urban gentry became the main carrier of the all-pervading Confucian ideology.

4. *Court Buddhism*, a persistent phenomenon since the early fifth century, is generally marked by an ambiguous attitude: on the one hand, there is a varying degree of patronage (Buddhism as a magical protection; donations to specific state-sponsored temples; translation activities supported as 'good works' for the karmic benefit of the dynasty); on the other hand, there is a constant policy of supervising the clergy, placing it under bureaucratic control, and checking its growth.

V. *Attitudes of the State*

The relation between state and saṅgha is a basic theme in the history of Chinese Buddhism. Here again, we have to differentiate, distinguishing
[125] various levels of response. If we relate them to the four strata mentioned under IV, the following rough picture emerges.

1. The attitude towards popular Buddhism was, in general, marked by an atmosphere of distrust, directed against the 'uncontrollable' economic and social activities of the clergy among the population and the unwanted growth of the saṅgha. Occasionally, the saṅgha was also suspected of

subversive activities, notably as regards the rise of heterodox sectarian movements. Officially, a distinction was made between officially recognized monastic institutions and the vast majority of small temples and shrines that, formally speaking, had no right to exist (even if they were normally tolerated).

2. The *clerical establisment* was generally patronized, or at least granted the right to exist (except in rare cases of anti-Buddhist repression). To some extent it was associated with state and dynasty (court priests; rituals performed at the court; sponsorship of translation activities); on the other hand, patronage was limited to a well-defined sphere of action, see (4) below.

3. *Lay Buddhism* of 'respectable' type (i.e. as practised by members of the cultured élite) was fully tolerated, though not encouraged. Even the severe repression of 845 was only directed against the saṅgha—at no time in Chinese history before the modern period has Buddhism as a creed been subjected to prohibition or persecution.

4. *Court Buddhism* was to some extent regarded as indispensable, as a spiritual reinforcement of the dynasty's well-being. However, it was limited to the performance of specific rituals and to certain types of sponsoring, and always remained in a marginal position. There was no question of incorporating Buddhist elements into the 'hard core' of the state ideology, the concept of imperial rule, and the great state of rituals that served to confirm the Son of Heaven's status as carrier of the Heavenly Mandate. The central tradition has always remained closed to Buddhist influences—even during the heyday of Buddhism in China, China never showed any tendency to become a Buddhist state.

VI. *The Long-Term Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Culture*

1. *The Decline of Buddhism in late Imperial Times*

To the historian, the decline of Buddhism in China since the ninth century as a complex historical phenomenon is as fascinating as its rise and expansion more than half a millennium earlier. It may be useful to contrast the two processes, or rather the configuration of circumstances under which they took place.

[126] In most general terms, it may be said that the following basic factors played an important, and perhaps even decisive, role in the initial spread and first flowering of Buddhism in early medieval China.

a) *The weak state.* Since the late Han, the bureaucratic state had largely been supplanted by a semi-feudal system dominated by the great aristocratic families competing for political power and prestige. In the North, the instability of the state was, moreover, aggravated by 'barbarian' rule, under which non-Chinese military élites maintained themselves in a precarious position, torn between the conflicting necessities of guarding their identity as a foreign dominant minority and adapting themselves to Chinese institutions. Buddhism profited from this, because the weak state had lost its power to exercise effective control, and also because it could be used by non-Chinese rulers as a means to reinforce their own position *vis-à-vis* the Chinese population.

b) *The temporary set-back suffered by Confucianism* as a state ideology. In early medieval times, the direct link between bureaucratic career and Confucian education (a characteristic feature of Han government) was lost. The cultured élite mainly turned to other sources of inspiration, such as ontological speculations ('Dark Learning'), nature mysticism, and religious Daoism. In this intellectual atmosphere, Buddhism was able to attract the attention of at least a part of the cultured élite, competing with religious Daoism for the patronage of the aristocracy. Conversions made among the élite added to the prestige of the saṅgha, and led to the formation of an upper layer of 'clerical intelligentsia' (partly of aristocratic background)—an ecclesiastical establishment which came to form the backbone of the Buddhist church.

c) *Little ideological resistance among the population.* In medieval times, whatever was left of Confucianism was confined to the upper layer of society. Both popular religion and religious Daoism at grass-roots level were localized, fragmented, and organizationally weak. The Buddhist monastery and Buddhist lay institutions could develop at that level without meeting serious resistance.

In later imperial times, on all these three essential points the situation had changed beyond recognition:

a) *The dirigistic state,* supported by a centralized bureaucracy, had come into being, and had developed instruments of control that enabled it to curb the size of the saṅgha, to wear down its autonomy, and to reduce its status to that of a professional group without special privileges. At its heyday, Buddhism had largely depended on the patronage of the medieval élite—that of the aristocratic families. The late Tang marks the end of that

oligarchy, and Buddhism declined as a result. The new élite, that of the urban 'gentry' or 'scholar-official class' turned Confucian and withheld its support—their interest was focused on the examination hall rather than
[127] on the saṅgha.

b) *The revival of Confucianism* is inseparably connected with the rise of this type of scholar-official class—in a way, Neo-Confucianism, in all its variety, may be regarded as the characteristic ideology of that bureaucratic élite. The concrete function of Confucianism was immensely enhanced by the examination system—once more, Confucian studies formed the prerequisite for gaining access to career and status. In Tang times, the clerical establishment had still offered a viable alternative way of life (or intellectual career), especially to talented young people who did not belong to the aristocracy. The Confucian state examinations of late imperial times, offering access to the ruling élite on a much wider scale, posed a challenge to which Buddhism had no answer.

c) *Ideological resistance among the population.* Especially in Ming times, Confucianism developed into a powerful internal missionary movement, with the ultimate aim of completely Confucianizing society, and using as its instruments a great variety of channels (schools; large-scale propagation of Confucian mores; the codification of rules of behaviour in the form of family and clan "instructions"; village compacts, and systems of ideological control maintained by the local authorities). In this way, a simplified, 'activist' type of Confucianism filtered down into the mass of the population, with the backing of both private Neo-Confucian literati and government authorities, and often with a strong anti-Buddhist bias. This large-scale Confucianization of society has no doubt been one of the most powerful factors in the decline of Buddhism during the long 'Indian summer' of the Chinese empire.

2. *Digestion*

It cannot be doubted that Buddhism has exerted a many-sided and lasting influence on Chinese culture. However, apart from popular Buddhism which, in spite of its syncretic nature and its doctrinal poverty, has still maintained its Buddhist identity, it must be stressed that in most cases Buddhist elements have been 'digested', in otherwords they have been absorbed into the mainstream of Chinese culture and have mostly lost their specific Buddhist nature in the process.

This is most clearly exemplified by the formation of Neo-Confucian ideology itself, for it is generally recognized that in building their own

ontological and metaphysical system, the founders of Neo-Confucianism of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in fact absorbed a number of basic concepts derived from Buddhist scholastic philosophy and *Chan* intuitionism. Buddhism thus acted as a catalyst in producing its greatest rival—the Neo-Confucian synthesis. The great tradition of Chinese Buddhism faded away into Confucianism in a way that reminds one of the absorption of Indian Buddhism in its last stage by Hinduism.

The same kind of digestion is found in practically all sectors of Chinese
[128] civilization: the 'prosimetric form' of Chinese popular literature which owes its origin to the mixture of prose and *gāthās* in Buddhist texts; the pagoda which has become a completely Sinicized structure serving to avert evil influences also outside a Buddhist context; and the universal use of printing (a technique that was first evolved as a means of reproducing Buddhist texts and holy images), to name only a few examples. Buddhism has done to Chinese civilization what any good Bodhisattva should do: it has enriched its surroundings in countless ways, both spiritually and materially, and precisely by losing its identity its benefits may have become even more effective.

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HAN BUDDHISM AND THE WESTERN REGION

I. *Han Buddhism as a Composite Phenomenon*

Thirty years ago, the study of Han Buddhism seemed to have reached its saturation point. The historical and pseudo-historical data had been collected, sifted and interpreted by dozens of scholars; reliable evidence was scanty and fragmentary, and every drop of information appeared to have been squeezed out of it. Some specific areas, such as the linguistic and stylistic analysis of the archaic Chinese versions of Buddhist texts, still awaited exploration, but they concerned philology rather than history. Only new discoveries could substantially add to our knowledge about the embryonic phase of Buddhism in China that roughly coincides with the Eastern Han period.

Since the early 'seventies, such new discoveries have been made, notably in the field of material culture. Before that time, only very few material relics of Han Buddhism (or, more vaguely, of Buddhist influence on Han representational art) were known, and they did not show any coherent pattern: a mutilated Prākrit inscription in *Kharoṣṭhī* script, probably from Luoyang,[1] a seated Buddha carved into the upper door-lintel of a Han tomb at Mahao 麻濠 (Sichuan),[2] and a fragment of a Han relief from Tengxian 滕縣 (Shandong).[3] Since then, archaeology has yielded many more examples of Buddhist elements in the context of Han religious art; together they have added a new dimension to our perception of the way in which Buddhist themes became part of the *répertoire* of Chinese religious lore in the second and eariy third centuries CE, and in some cases
[159] they have led to a better understanding of certain aspects that so far only could be studied on the basis of textual evidence.

As a result, we are now able to approach Han Buddhism in a more analytical way. We have come to realize, more clearly than we did, that

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1 J. Brough, "A Kharoṣṭhī inscription from China", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24, 1961, pp. 517–530.

2 Cf. Yu Weichao 俞偉超, "Dong-Han fojiao tuxiang kao" 東漢佛教圖像考, *Wenwu* 1980. 5, pp. 68–77, esp. pp. 74–75; Wu Hung, "Buddhist Elements in Early Chinese Art (2nd and 3rd centuries CE), in *Artibus Asiae* 47 (1986), pp. 263–316, esp. p. 269.

3 Yu Weichao, op. cit., p. 74; Wu Hung, op. cit., p. 272.

Han Buddhism was a composite phenomenon, consisting of at least three well-defined sectors: first, a hybrid cult centered upon the court and the imperial family; secondly, the first nucleus of "canonical" monastic Buddhism, and, in the third place, the diffuse and unsystematic adoption of Buddhist elements in indigenous beliefs and cults. Since this article is not devoted to Han Buddhism as such, we shall here just present these three sectors in bare outline, without referring to the many studies that have been written about almost every item in the list.[4]

(1) *Hybrid Court Buddhism*

It is a striking fact that the earliest references to Buddhism in Chinese sources in some way or other all are related to the "centre of authority": the emperor and his entourage, courtiers and court ceremonials. Let us very briefly survey the evidence.

(a) A tradition (of doubtful historical value) according to which a Yuezhi envoy to the Chinese court in 2 BCE transmitted one or more Buddhist scriptures to a student of the imperial academy.[5]
(b) The famous story of the "official" introduction of Buddhism as a result of emperor Ming's prophetic dream, around 65 CE: no doubt a pious legend, probably not older than the beginning of the third century.[6] The tradition may have some historical value, because in spite of all legendary traits the story possibly contains a memory of Buddhist activity at Mingdi's court (cf. below, sub (d)).
(c) The first "hard evidence": in 65 CE an imperial edict praises Liu Ying 劉英, the King of Chu, for the way in which he practices the cult(s) of
[160] Huang-Lao and the Buddha, and he is exhorted "lavishly to entertain the lay believers (*yipusai* 伊蒲塞) and monks (*sangmen* 桑門) at his court at Pengcheng 彭城 (N. Jiangsu).[7]

4 In this list, each item will only be accompanied by an indication of its earliest occurrence in the Chinese sources, and by a reference to the relevant passage(s) in my *Buddhist Conquest of China*, Leiden, 1959 (henceforth *BC*).

5 *Sanguo zhi* 三國志, *Wei zhi* 魏志, j. 30, p. 859; quotation from the *Xirong zhuan* 西戎傳 of the lost *Weilue* 魏略; cf. *BC* pp. 24–25 and p. 326, notes 32–39.

6 Earliest version in the anonymous "Preface to the *Sūtra* in 42 Sections" (probably mid-3rd century CE), in *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集, j. 6, T 2145, 42b; *BC* p. 22 and p. 325, notes 20–22.

7 *Hou Han Shu*, Zhonghua shuju ed., j. 42, p. 1428; *BC* pp. 26–27 and p. 326, notes 42–47.

(d) The same document also proves that some knowledge of Buddhism must have existed in the imperial chancellery where the edict was drafted: it contains some essential Buddhist terms, and mentions a typically Buddhist ritual, *viz*. its "humane sacrifices" (no doubt referring to the fact that no sacrificial animals were used).

(e) At the beginning of the second century, when Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–130 CE) in his "Rhapsody of the Western Capital" (*Xijing fu* 西京賦) describes the splendour and gorgeous ceremonials of court life, he refers in passing to Buddhist monks (*sangmen* 桑門); two other lines from the same work have also in recent years tentatively been interpreted as indications of Buddhist elements in court ceremonials or "masquerades": "The white elephant effecting pregnancy" (according to some a symbolic representation of Siddhartha's miraculous conception),[8] and, more cryptically, "The relics (*sheli* 舍利—*śarīra*) exhale(?), and change into a chariot of Immortals".[9]

(f) Somewhat later, around the middle of the second century, the curious *śarīra* theme appears again in the same context. A preserved fragment of Cai Zhi's 蔡植 "Administrative Ceremonials of Han Officials
[161] Selected for Use", *Hanguan dianzhi yishi xuan yong* 漢官典職儀式選用, describes how on the first morning of the new year, the emperor receives the congratulations of his courtiers, after which a spectacular show is performed: all kinds of acrobats and fabulous animals present themselves, among which "the *śarīra* coming from the West", *sheli cong xi fang lai* 舍利從西方來.[10] In the "Treatise on Music" (*Yuezhi* 樂

[8] *Wenxuan* 文選 (ed. Wanyou wenku), j. 2, p. 45; *BC* p. 29 and p. 329. n. 59. For the "white elephant", cf. *ib*., p. 43: 白象行盈. The meaning of *xing ying* is not quite clear; for another interpretation, cf. David Knechtges, *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature*, vol. I, Princeton, 1982, p. 233, who renders this line "A white elephant marched along nursing its calf". I agree with Wu Hong (op. cit., p. 37) that in this context, and especially because of its association with "*śarīra*", the white elephant must have its familiar Buddhist association. For the Buddhist background of at least some representations of elephants in Han art, see Yu Weichao, op. cit., p. 70 and p. 74, and Zhou Wenru 周文儒–儒, "Kongwangshan fojiao zaoxiang de ticai" 孔望山傳-佛教造像的題材, *Wenwu* 1981. 7, pp. 16–19, esp. p. 19.

[9] *Ib*., p. 43; 舍利颬颬. 化爲仙車, Knechtges (op. cit., p. 233) follows the variant reading *hanli* 含利, and translates "The *hanli*, mouth gaping, changed into a sylph's chariot". I prefer the reading *sheli*, in the first place because it is supported by a very early parallel text (Cai Zhi's description of the new year's ceremonies at the Eastern Han court, immediately below, and secondly, because exactly the same combination of themes ("white elephant" and "*śarīra*") is also found elsewhere, both in a historical source (cf. below, p. 161) and in Eastern Han tomb wall-painting (cf. below, p. 164).

[10] Sun Xingyan 孫星衍 (1753–1818) has published the collected fragments of Cai Zhi's work in his *Pingjin guan congshu* 平津館叢書. The relevant passage is found in vol. 5,

志) of the *Jinshu* we find a description of the same new year celebration, clearly based upon Cai Zhi's account, and here the theme of the *śarīra* is again associated with that of the "white elephant".[11] It states that under the Wei and Jin some songs that accompanied the ceremonial still were performed—among which "The White Elephant Effects Suckling (—child-birth?)",[12] doubtless the same act that was mentioned by Zhang Heng. The Buddhist origin of the act is expressed more clearly by the significant words "… comes from the West", and its religious nature is, rather surprisingly, confirmed by the fact that the same combination of "relics" and "white elephant" is represented on the walls of an Eastern Han tomb excavated at Helinger, in Inner Mongolia (cf. below, p. 164). In a Buddhist context, the combination is quite logical, since the white elephant symbolizes the Buddha's conception and the relics stand for his *parinirvāṇa*.

(g) The "*Sūtra* in 42 Sections", *Sishi'er zhang jing* 四十二章經, traditionally regarded as the first Buddhist text ever translated into Chinese, has been transmitted in various versions; two early quotations show that even the most primitive extant version[13] is rather different from the
[162] Han original. For our purpose it is significant that two passages are quoted in the memorial submitted to Emperor Huan in 166 CE by the scholar and astrologer Xiang Kai 襄楷, which indicates that the next was known in court circles.

(h) In the same memorial, Xiang Kai states that the emperor performs sacrifices to Huang-Lao and the Buddha (*foutu* 浮圖).

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pp. 9a–10a of the 1884 edition. It has been studied by Derk Bodde, who prefers the reading 含利, and translates "The *hanli*-beast comes from the West. It besports itself in the courtyard …". However, he also discusses the reading *sheli*, which he, after all, considers to be the original term, based on "a non-Chinese, possibly Indian, name", *hanli* being a secondary "sinification". He rightly emphasizes the significant fact that the creature bearing that name is said to come from the West, probably referring to the Western Region. Cf. Derk Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China: New Year and Other Annual Observances during the Han Dynasty*, Princeton, 1975, pp. 151–155.

[11] *Jinshu*, j. 23, p. 718.

[12] *Jinshu, ib.*: 白象行乳.

[13] T 794 ("Korean" version, with many variant readings); cf. *BC* pp. 29–30 and p. 329, notes 61–64. Quotation in the memorial submitted by Xiang Kai (166 CE) in *HHS* j. 30B, p. 1082; *BC* p. 37 and p. 333, n. 105; quotation in "Essentials of Religion", *Feng fa yao* 奉法要 by Xi Chao 郗超 (366–377), *BC* p. 173 and p. 397, n. 102.

If we try to summarise this information, several facts stand out; taken together they allow us to sketch the contours of a very specific kind of hybrid cult.

In the first place, we clearly are dealing with practices performed in court circles. Without exception, the activities reported take place in that context. The combination of Huang-Lao with the Buddha is only found in this kind of "Buddhism"—in fact, it appears to be an exotic variant of the *fangshi* 方士 Daoism that had been practised at the Chinese court since the Western Han.

Secondly: in spite of the hybrid character of the cult, it is a striking fact that several times reference is made to the presence of Buddhist monks, even as early as the middle of the first century CE. We do not know anything about their status and origin, and there is no suggestion of any kind of monastic organization. They must have been foreigners, and since the texts repeatedly mention some kind of sacrifice, they may simply have acted as a kind of outlandish ritual specialists.

The third characteristic that sets this type of court-centered cult apart from the other sectors of Han Buddhism is difficult to explain: it is the use of a very curious way of transcribing Buddhist terms. Forms like *foutu* (**b'i̯ə̯u.d'uo*) for *buddha; sangmen* (**sâng.muən*) for *śramaṇa*, and *yipusai* (**..i.puâ.sək*) for *upāsaka* are completely different from all other early transcriptions that were coined by the first translators of Buddhist scriptures since the middle of the second century; in extant Han scriptures we invariably find the familiar *fo* 佛, *shamen* 沙門 and *youbosai* 優波塞. It is to be noted that the same quaint system of transcription is also found in the mid-3rd century source that speaks, *inter alia*, about our first item, the Yuezhi envoy of 2 BCE;[14] beside *foutu* and *sangmen* it contains several other curious transcriptions that suggest that this mid-3rd century text
[163] belongs to the same tradition.

(2) *The "Church of Luoyang"*

If the first sector of Han Buddhism has its own identity, the second one can be even more clearly defined. It is a nucleus of organized monastic Buddhism, with foreign monks and Chinese lay believers, with its own residence (already called *si* 寺), and "canonical" (in the sense of "based on the scriptural tradition")—not a hybrid, but rather a transplant. Its beginning

[14] E.g, Lin'er 臨兒 (**Li̯əm.ńźie̯*) for Lumbinī; Xietouye 屑頭邪 (*siet.d'ə̯u.(z)ia*) for Śuddhodana, and Shalü 沙律 (*şa.li̯uĕt*) probably for Śariputra.

is marked by the arrival of the Parthian missionary and translator An Shigao 安世高 at Luoyang in 148 CE.

Apart from the *Kharoṣṭhī* inscription mentioned above, this embryo of metropolitan, "ecclesiastical" Buddhism is only known to us through what is left of its scriptural activities: some thirty primitive translations, two commentaries on canonical texts, and a few colophons.[15] However, the materials allow us to draw some conclusions as to the nature and activities of that community. It was organized around a number of foreign monks working together with Chinese assistants and supported by lay devotees. For our purpose it is important to note that the foreign missionaries mentioned in the sources all came from "India" (probably the northwest, i.e. Gandhāra and Kashmir) and from the western part of Central Asia (the Kushan empire, Parthia and the region of Samarkand), and not from present-day Xinjiang.

Some translated texts show a high degree of sinicization in style and terminology; such texts appear to have been adapted to the taste and comprehension of a fairly educated lay public. However, other texts are completely different. They treat the mediation techniques and yoga practices of "professional" monastic Buddhism, and they hardly show any signs of cultural adaptation. Lay believers were also involved in it, and we know the names of some Chinese practicants who had mastered the *dhyāna* techniques under the guidance of a foreign master. However, in spite of this lay participation in a type of activity that normally is restricted to the monk's way of life, this earliest community bears the stamp of authenticity: a nucleus of monks who devote themselves to the practice of the religious life; active in translating, preaching and explication, and supported by a circle of *upāsakas*. There is no sign of any connection between it
[164] and the hybrid court Buddhism described above; typologically speaking, the Church of Luoyang has its own clear-cut identity.[16]

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[15] For a survey of authentic Han translations, see my "Late Han Vernacular Elements in the Earliest Buddhist Translations", in *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers' Association* 12, 1977, pp. 177–203.

[16] It is not probable that the "Buddhist temple" built by the warlord Zhai Rong 笮融 in 193/194 CE at Pengcheng in northern Jiangsu belongs to the same type (*Sanguo zhi*, Wu zhi 吳志, j. 4, p. 1185; *HHS* j. 13, p. 2368; *BC* pp. 27–28 and pp. 327–328, no. 5), There is every reason to assume that the description should not be taken at face value. The description of the structure and size of the building (large enough to contain "more than three thousand devotees") clearly bears all the signs of exaggeration. In any case, no mention is made of Buddhist monks taking part in the ceremonies.

(3) *Diffuse Borrowing of Buddhist Elements*

Here again we are dealing with an area of Buddhist influence that has its own characterics: the incorporation of isolated Buddhist elements into indigenous local cults. It was the beginning of an absorption and digestion of Buddhist themes that largely were detached from their original context and content, and that became associated with, or grafted upon, pre-existing elements of religious lore. For later centuries the process is also known (though always very fragmentarily) from written sources; for this very early period we have to rely upon the archaeological evidence.

So fer representations of undoubtedly Buddhist origin have been found at six sites:

(a) *Helinger* 和林格爾 (Inner Mongolia): wall-paintings representing an Immortal riding a white elephant and a globular object on a plate with the inscription "relic" (*sheli* 舍利) in an Eastern Han tomb (second half of second century CE); associated with various mythological animals, and facing the well-known images of Dongwang gong 東王公 and Xiwang mu 西王母.[17]

(b) *Yinan* 沂南 (Shandong): on the sides of an octagonal pillar in a mid-2nd century tomb, two standing figures with halo, and a seated Buddha with *uṣṇīṣa*-like top-knot, the right hand raised in the gesture of "fearlessness" (*abhaya-mudrā*), in a traditional decor of Dongwang gong, Xiwang mu, feathered Immortals and mythological animals.[18]

[165] (c) *Tengxian* 滕縣 (Shandong): a fragment of an Eastern Han relief showing two six-tusked elephants with riders, preceded by a mounted *pixie* 辟邪 (cf. above, n. 2).

(d) *Mahao* 麻濠 (Sichuan): a seated Buddha with *abhaya-mudrā* carved on a lintel in an Eastern Han tomb; in three tombs in the neighbourhood three other images of this type are said to have been found (cf. above, n. 3).

(e) *Pengshan* 彭山 (Sichuan): a seated Buddha with halo and *uṣṇīṣa*, flanked by two attendants; modelled on the stand of an earthenware

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[17] Yu Weichao, op. cit., pp. 68–71; Wu Hong, op. cit., pp. 267–268. Yu's description is based on notes made at the time of the excavation in 1971; two years later the paintings in the antechamber had already partly become invisible. In *Helinger Hanmu bihua* 和林格爾漢墓壁畫 by Gai Shanlin 蓋山林 (Huhehot, 1978), the *śarīra* representation is not mentioned any more.

[18] Yu Weichao, op. cit., pp. 72–73; Wu Hung, op. cit., p. 268.

ritual object (a "money tree" 錢樹) belonging to a cult of the earth-god that in Han times is attested in Sichuan and Yunnan. The group occupies the position that in other objects of this type is filled by Dongwang gong and Xiwang mu.[19]

(f) *Kongwangskan* 孔望山 (near Lianyungang, northern Jiangsu): an assembly of about a hundred human and divine figures carved in a cliff; associated with two large monolithic sculptures representing an elephant with mahout and a frog. The carvings had been known for centuries, but since 1980, when it was discovered that a number of images show Buddhist features (seated and standing Buddhas with *uṣṇīṣa*, halo and *abhaya-mudrā*; a number of foreign-looking worshippers, and two composite representations, one of which undoubtedly is an attempt to render a *parinirvāṇa* scene), the Kongwangshan site has given rise to a vivid and sometimes quite polemical debate about
[166] its date and significance.[20] In spite of some dissident opinions, the

[19] Yu Weichao, op. cit., pp. 76–77; Wu Hung, op. cit., p. 270.

[20] In his article on Han Buddhist representations, Yu Weichao could not include the Kongwangshan carvings, that were investigated by several scholars (including Yu Weichao) in 1980, the year in which he published his survey. The most comprehensive description so far is to be found in the report of the Lianyungang City Museum (連云港市博物館), "Lianyungang Kongwangshan moya zaoxiang diaocha baogao" 連云港孔望山摩崖造像調查報告, *Wenwu* 1981. 7, pp. 1–7. Cf. also Wu Hung, op. cit., pp. 292–303. The scholarly debate about the nature and date of the Kongwangshan rock carvings has started immediately after the official report in the July, 1981 issue of *Wenwu*; it shows some curious features that seem to reflect the inner workings of "archaeological networks" in Mainland China. Apart from a short report on a Kongwangshan symposium held in Beijing in April (*WW* 1981. 7, p. 20), in which at least mention is made of some points of controversy, all other articles that appeared in *Wenwu* from July, 1981 to August, 1984 are in favour of an early dating (Eastern Han), and stress the Buddhist content of some of the images: Yu Weichao 俞偉超 and Xin Lixiang 信立祥 on the problem of dating (*WW* 1981. 7, pp. 8–15); Zhou Wenru 周文儒 on the Buddhist themes (*bi.* pp. 16–19); Bu Liansheng 步連生 on specific Buddhist features (1982. 9, pp. 61–65); Li Hongfu 李洪甫 on the resemblance of Kongwangshan images and scenes depicted in Eastern Han representational art (*ib*., pp. 66–70); Jia E 賈峨 on the use of elephants in shows and Buddhist processions (*ib*., pp. 53–60), and Ding Yizhen 丁义珍 on the relation between the Kongwangshan images and the Eastern Han temple of the Lord of the Eastern Sea (*WW* 1984. 8, pp. 78–87). So far, *Kaogu* has only paid slight attention to the Kongwangshan issue. In the *Kaogu* issue of January, 1985 (pp. 78–87), Ruan Rongchun 阮榮春 squarely attacks the "Eastern Han thesis": the carvings are much later, and probably date from Tang times; the same doubts are expressed by Ding Mingyi (1986. 10, pp. 940–949). The Eastern Han dating is eloquently (and, I think, quite convincingly) defended by Li Hongfu (*ib*., pp. 930–939) and by Tang Chi 湯池 (1987. 11, pp. 1011–1023). After that, the Kongwangshan controversy appears to have come to an end. In his survey article published in 1986, Wu Hung (op. cit., p. 295) argues that the "primitive" features are due to the local origin of the carvings, and assigns a wider time span to the Kongwangshan carvings: "late second to third century".

> evidence no doubt is in favour of an early date: late second or early third century CE. Here, again, disparate Buddhist elements have been incorporated into a Chinese (notably Daoist) religious *répertoire:* there are some indications that the dominant image represents Xiwang mu, and the whole complex probably was associated with a late Han Daoist sanctuary devoted to the "Lord of the Eastern Sea", *Donghai jun* 東海君.[21]

This very brief survey has here been presented merely to show that we are dealing with a third, quite distinctive sector of Buddhist influence in Eastern Han times. The material relics illustrate how Buddhist elements found their way into Chinese cultic practices, and the extent to which they lost their original function in the process. Some general conclusions can be drawn.

The first one concerns the geographical spread of the objects, which is quite surprising, as it stretches from the coastal area to Inner Mongolia and Sichuan. There appears to be no connection with the spread of monastic Buddhism, which is not attested in Sichuan before the very end of the fourth century (not to speak about the steppe region in the far north), and the representations cannot be traced back to any archaic translated text. The channels of transmission must have been of a quite different nature. It may well be that such Buddhist visual traits were spread through the circulation of material objects (amulets, small portable images, decorative patterns on vessels, relic-containers and the like) that could easily find their way into far-away regions, and for that reason also easily could lose
[167] their original Buddhist meaning. The use of such portable cultic objects is amply attested in the whole Buddhist world; early examples have been found at various sites in Central Asia.[22] The geographical extent of the spread of such objects, also outside the sphere of Buddhism, is strikingly exemplified by the small images of the Hellenistic-Egyptian gods Serapis

[21] Cf. Ding Yizhen 丁义珍, "Kongwangshan beipan keshi kao" 孔望山杯柈刻石考, *Wenwu* 1984. 8, pp. 78–87.

[22] Cf. R. Whitfield, *The Art of Central Asia in the Stein Collection of the British Museum*, vol. III, Tokyo/London, 1985, p. 10: small Buddhist images carved in wood, as portable objects of devotion. A similar very small bronze image (only 7 cm. high), found by Sven Hedin at Yotkan, is illustrated in Kumagai, op. cit., fig. 119.

and Harpocrates that were found by the Ōtani mission at Khotan and Turfan.[23]

In the second place: the close link with religious Daoism is not new or surprising, but the use of Buddhist images in the decoration of tombs and sepulchral objects certainly is; the examples found so far point to a very early association of certain Buddhist elements with death and the hereafter, and such a funerary role is not attested in any written source.

Finally, in all those cases where Buddhist images still have a clearly recognizable "iconographic identity", they invariably exhibit the features of the Indo-Greek style of Buddhist art that took its rise in the Gandhāra region (in present-day Pakistan) around the beginning of the second century of our era. In other words: they were "up-to-date" borrowings, roughly synchronous with the date of the Indian originals. The non-Indian features are of Chinese origin and can be traced back to the well-known conventions of Han art—there is no sign of any formal distortion due to a non-Chinese artistic tradition originating from some intermediate zone of transmission.

We may conclude that at a very early date, in any case before 65 CE, Buddhist influence, spread by foreign monks in China, had given rise to a mixed Huang-Lao/Buddhist cult practised in court circles. The well-attested early date is surprising, and even puzzling, for, as we shall see, there is no evidence for the spread of Buddhism beyond the Hindu Kush before the reign of the Kushan emperor Kaniṣka, and even according to the earliest estimate his accession only took place in 78 CE.[24] For want of
[168] a better explanation, we can only suppose that the *sangmen* at the court of the King of Chu were "stray monks" who somehow happened to have drifted into China, even before the great wave of Buddhist expansion in western Central Asia had started.

A century later, around the middle of the second century, the situation has changed. The nuclear monastic community at Luoyang is manned by

[23] M. Maillard, "A propos de deux statuettes en terre rapportées par la mission Ōtani: Sarapis at Harpocrates en Asie Centrale", *Journal Asiatique* 263, 1975, pp. 223–230.

[24] The date of the accession of Kaniṣka and, consequently, of the beginning of the "Kaniṣka era" still is one of the most controversial issues in the early history of India and Central Asia. In general, the dates advocated by historians and archaeologists range from 78 to ca. 120 CE, but there still are scholars who support the late chronology (144 CE) first proposed by R. Girshmann. Cf. A. L. Basham (ed.), *Papers on the Date of Kaniṣka*, Leiden, 1968. It should be added that the "hardest" evidence (based upon the chronological correlation of Roman coins and their Kushan imitations) appears to rule out a date earlier than 110 CE.

a number of foreign *ācāryas*, all of whom came from the general area stretching from Gandhāra to Sogdiana and the eastern borderland of Parthia. At that time, that whole vast region was more or less controlled by the Kushan rulers from their headquarters in the Kabul valley, and the establishment of monastic Buddhism in China may be regarded as a side-effect of the spread of Buddhism throughout the Kushan empire. Here, again, we are struck by the synchronicity of the two events, the "up-to-date" character of Chinese Buddhism which we noted above in another context: when the first missionaries from Parthia and Samarkand arrived in Luoyang, only some dozens of years had elapsed since Buddhism had reached their own countries.

At first sight the conclusion seems obvious: Buddhism in Han China constitutes the eastern extension of a huge Buddhist expansion that started in the early Kushan period; from the Kushan empire it must have spread east of the Pamir and established itself in the oasis kingdoms along the two branches of the Silk Route, north and south of the Taklamakan desert From there, in a gradual process of expansion, moving from oasis to oasis, it finally reached China. Thus China was exposed to Buddhist influence either after the oasis kingdoms had been conquered by the *dharma*, or roughly at the same time. Or, as formulated by John Brough: "the advance of the Doctrine was, on the whole, a gradual process of infiltration: . . . a position of some sort in Central Asia had already been established, from which secondary tentacles could then reach out into China. Indeed, mere common sense would suggest as much".[25]

In fact, the picture of such a gradual geographical expansion agrees
[169] with common sense to such an extent that it never has really been tested in the light of available data. Once we do so, we have to face the paradoxical situation that so far there actually is no reliable evidence for the existence of monastic Buddhism in present-day Xinjiang before ca. 250 CE—almost two hundred years after Emperor Ming's edict, and a century after the establishment of the first monastery at Luoyang. It is a paradox that calls for an explanation. I believe that at least a tentative solution can be found in the mechanism by which Buddhism propagated itself as a system of monastic units, and in the special socio-economic conditions that made such an expansion possible.

[25] John Brough, "Comments on third-century Shan-shan and the History of Buddhism", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 28 (1965), p. 587.

II. *The Spread of Buddhism: Contact Expansion, Sponsorship and the Urban Setting*

The diffusion of Buddhism can be defined in very concrete terms. In spite of the important role of the lay believers as supporters (and, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, as aspirants to the more distant goal of Buddhahood), the nucleus of religious life has always and everywhere been formed by the *saṅgha*, the unworldly community of "professional" monks and nuns. Without that clerical nucleus the Doctrine would lose its institutional base. The diffusion of Buddhism amounts to the diffusion of a well-defined monastic institution—the monastery (*vihāra*).

The gradual spread of monastic Buddhism was in the first place the result of a mechanism of growth that formed part of the system itself. It constitutes a classical example of "contact expansion", and it must have been in operation since the first formation of monastic communities.[26] Economically speaking, such groups are parasitic: they consist of mendicant monks who live from gifts. The territory of the local monastic community is the *sīmā*, the "begging circuit", i.e. the area that the monks can cover on their daily begging round. It consequently has a fixed and rather modest maximum size. However, since every successful community tends to grow, and because there only is a limited margin of surplus production available to support such a non-productive group, a natural process of "moving out" will start. Surplus monks will wander away and penetrate further into the country, along the main routes. They will establish new communities in the most suitable localities, in a prosperous agrarian region, or near a big city or market town. In short: places where there are
[170] many prosperous families who, once converted, will be *dānapati*, "lords of gifts"—pious laymen and laywomen who support the *saṅgha*. This process of branching out is repeated countless times. It is mechanical, continuous, and unguided, and it constitutes the most basic driving force behind the expansion of Buddhism as a monastic system.

However, it is not the only one. It is always supplemented, and sometimes modified, by "high-level patronage". Support of the *saṅgha* by members of the elite will accelerate the process and increase its scale. As soon as Buddhism has gained its lay adherents among the elite, and particularly

[26] Cf. my "Bouddhisme et Christianisme en Chine, deux types de diffusion", in *Bouddhisme, Christianisme et société chinoise*, Paris, 1990, pp. 1–42.

at the court, we everywhere witness the emergence of a top level of rich monasteries, supported by donations in land and goods, and peopled by large numbers of sedentary monks. It is accompanied by the formation of a clerical elite, and the largest monasteries become centres of Buddhist culture.

Royal patronage is an extremely important factor, not only because of the material benefits directly connected with it, but also because it facilitates the spread of Buddhism within the ruler's territory. It is not without reason that the two great waves of Buddhist expansion beyond the ancient heart-land in the Gangetic basin coincide with two periods of large-scale political unification. Around the middle of the third century BCE, at the time of the Maurya empire, Buddhism spread not only over most of the Indian subcontinent, but also to the northwest, into the regions of Gandhāra, Kashmir and eastern Afghanistan. The second wave took place in the first and second century of our era, in the Kushan empire that had been founded by Indo-scythian ("Yuezhi" 月支) conquerors, and that stretched from the Amu-darya to northern India. It is also no coincidence that the Buddhist tradition associates these great "conquests of the *dharma*" with two paragons of imperial piety and patronage: the Maurya ruler Aśoka, and the Kushan king Kaniṣka.

A countryside with a well-developed agriculture is no doubt able to support groups of monks living in small and simple *vikāras*. However, flourishing monastic life with large monasteries presupposes the existence of cities. The urban setting of Buddhism is amply confirmed by the scriptural tradition: the Buddha's sermons are generally situated at or near big cities like Vaiśālī, Śrāvastī, Rājagṛha and Benares, and the first famous donations made by lay supporters are not only reported to have been made by the local rulers, but also by prominent citizens: the rich bankers
[171] Anāthapiṇḍada at Śrāvastī and Ghoṣita at Kauśambī, the famous courtesan Āmrapalī at Vaiśāli. The Buddhist scriptural tradition constantly bears witness to this close relation with city life, from the rich merchants Trapuṣa and Bhallika who are said to have been the Buddha's first lay converts to the exploits of the Bodhisattva Vimalakīrti who moves in the mundane atmosphere of the big city: he makes his rounds in the amusement parks and gambling houses, undertakes business deals, and visits restaurants and brothels. The urban basis of large-scale monastic Buddhism as it appears in the scriptural tradition is also borne out by the epigraphic materials, witness the many early votive inscriptions at Bhārhut and Sāñcī made by

bankers, guild leaders, merchants and artisans[27]—typical representatives of a flourishing urban civilization that supplied the *saṅgha* with its most generous *dānapati*.

When at the time of Kaniṣka, in the first or early second century CE, Buddhism spread from northwest India and eastern Afghanistan to the regions farther north, it found all the conditions required for its diffusion and development. It was a civilized world, successively ruled by the Achaemenid satraps and by the Greek kings of Bactria and Sogdiana; since centuries it has been a region with large urban centres and a highly developed agriculture based upon extensive irrigation networks.[28] Buddhism took hold of the most prosperous parts of present-day Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, in the fertile Ferghana valley, and the middle and lower reaches of the Amu-darya. In this whole area Soviet archaeologists have found the remains of Buddhist monasteries, the earliest of which date from the beginning of the second century,[29] only a few decades before the first missionaries from Sogdiana (*Kangju* 康居) and Parthia (Anxi 安息) arrived in the Chinese capital.

[172] III. *"Serindia" in Han Times: The Buddhological Vacuum*

There can be no doubt that the earliest missionaries came to China by following the two branches of the Silk Road, the Sogdians and Parthians taking the northern route, and the Indians and the Indoscythians (who probably came from the southern parts of the Kushan empire) travelling along the southern branch. However, as we noted above, this function of present-day Xinjiang as a transit zone apparently has not led to the establishment of monastic Buddhism in the oasis state at such an early date.

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[27] Cf. the types of donors listed by Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien des origines à l'ère Śaka*, Louvain, 1958, pp. 454–457.

[28] For the urban development in western Central Asia since the middle of the first millennium BCE, cf. Karl Jettmar, "Mittelasien und Sibirien in vortürkischer Zeit", in B. Spuler (ed.), *Geschichte Mittelasiens*, Leiden, 1966, pp. 1–105, esp. pp. 70–72; and A. Belenitsky (trsl. by J. Hogarth), *Central Asia*, Geneva, 1968; for the extensive irrigation systems of ancient Khorezm and along the lower reaches of the Amu-darya that partly date back to the same period, see G. Frumkin, (cf. note 29), p. 84.

[29] The earliest Buddhist sites so far investigated are situated at Kara-tepe near Termez (Uzbekistan), where a Buddhist cave monastery was found, and the Buddhist shrine at Giaur-kala near Merv (Turkmenistan). Cf. G. Frumkin, *Archaeology in Central Asia*, Leiden/Cologne, 1970, p. 111 and p. 147; and G. M. Bongard-Levin, "India and Central Asia; Historical-Cultural Contacts in Ancient Times", in Amalendu Guha (ed.), *Central Asia: Movement of Peoples and Ideas*, New Delhi, 1970, pp. 97–109, esp. pp. 99–102.

As far as the northern route is concerned, all authorities agree in assigning post-Han dates to even the earliest Buddhist remains. At Tumshuq, west of Kucha, no Buddhist materials are dated earlier than the fourth century.[30] In the Kucha region (Qizil, Qumtura) the "first style" of Buddhist wall-paintings is supposed to be of the same period;[31] this is supported by radiocarbon tests using organic samples from Qizil: for the earliest sites (caves 6 and 38) they yield as approximate dates 310 ± 80 and 320 ± 80 CE.[32] Further to the east, at Sorchuk/Karashahr, the most ancient Buddhist remains are even much later (second half of the first millennium),[33] and in the Turfan region they are not considered older than the fourth century;[34] this estimate, based on stylistic grounds, is again confirmed by the result of C_{14} tests (earliest date, based on material from Bezeklik: 444 ± 75 CE).[35]

The very late establishment of monastic Buddhism along the northern branch of the Silk Road is also fully substantiated by the Chinese sources. Apart from a late and completely unreliable story about a Buddhist water-vessel (*kuṇḍikā*) reported to have been offered by the king of Kucha to
[173] the Chinese emperor in 109 BCE,[36] we find that the first Kuchean monks active in China are attested in the late third and early fourth centuries CE. The earliest references to a Buddhist monastery at Kucha and to royal patronage at Kashgar are found in a source based upon information of the first half of the fourth century,[37] and the first reference to a flourishing

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30 Cf. M. Yaldiz, *Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte Chinesisch-Zentralasiens (Xinjiang)* (Handbuch der Orientalistik VII.iii.2), Leiden, 1987, pp. 110–112.

31 Cf. the survey of proposed dates in M. Yaldiz, op. cit., pp. 28–40.

32 List of C_{14} datings in *Chūgoku sekkutsu—Kijiru sekkutsu* 中國石窟一キジル石窟, Tokyo (Heibonsha), 1983, p. 173, compiled by the Committee in Charge of Cultural Relics (文教管理委員會) of the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region and the Bureau for the Preservation of Cultural Relics (文物保管所) of the Buddhist cave-temples at Qizil.

33 Cf. Yaldiz, op. cit., p. 113. The earliest literary evidence of Buddhism in the Karashahr region is supplied by Faxian, who visited it around 400 CE (T 2085 *Gaoxeng Faxian zhuan* 高僧法顯傳, 857b, section on Wuyi 烏夷國).

34 Cf. M. Yaldiz, op. cit., p. 118.

35 *Wenwu* 1984. 4.

36 The passage in the History of the Liang (*Liangshu* 40, p. 573) tells us how Liu Zhilin 劉之遴 (477–558), an enthusiastic collector of antiquities, offered four of his most valuable objects to the crown-prince, among which a *kuṇḍikā* with the (Chinese!) inscription "Presented by [the king of] Kucha in the second year of the Yuanfeng era" (109 BCE) 元封二年龜茲國獻. Liu Mau-tsai (*Kutscha und seine Beziehungen zu China vom 2 Jh. v. bis zum 6. Jh. n. Chr.*, vol. I, Wiesbaden, 1969, pp. 21–22) is prepared to accept this obviously apocryphal tradition as reliable historical evidence.

37 Passages from the (lost) *Xiyu ji* 西域記 by Dao'an 道安 (d. 385 CE), quoted in the *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 by Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (ca. 520 CE), cf. Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 and Xiong Huizhen 熊會貞 (*ann.*), *Shuijing zhu shu* 水經注疏, Beijing, 1955, j. 2, p. 22a and 27b. Dao'an never

monastic life at Kucha is a colophon of the period 373–393 CE;[38] around the same time the young Kumārājiva lived at Kucha, and according to his biography this oasis state counted "some ten thousand monks".[39] It should also be noted that Kucha is the only centre along the northern route from where missionaries and texts are stated to have come to China before the fifth century CE.

The oases in the Lop Nor region and along the southern branch of the Silk Road present a somewhat different picture. Here the traces of Buddhist activity reach back to a somewhat earlier period, especially in two neighbouring and closely related regions: the territory of the ancient state of Shanshan 鄯善 stretching from the Lop Nor to the Niya river, and Khotan. The major sites in the Shanshan area are those of Niya (*Jingjue* 精絕, called Caḍ'ota or Caḍ'oda in the *Kharoṣṭhī* documents), Loulan
[174] 樓蘭 (—Krora'iṃna, Krorayina), Mirān and Endere. The written materials found there, both in Chinese and in Gāndhārī prākrit that in Shanshan was used for administrative and commercial purposes, cover a period that with the help of dated Chinese documents can be defined as lasting from the middle of the third centuiy (earliest date: 263 CE) to ca. 330 CE.[40]

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visited the Western Region; his account was largely based upon information supplied by foreign monks. His main source appears to have been the (independently transmitted, and also now lost) *Xiyu zhuguo zhi* 西域諸國志 by a certain Fotudiao 佛圖調 (Buddhadeva) who before 349 CE studied together with Dao'an under the same master. Cf. Luciano Petech, "La 'Déscription des Pays d'Occident' de Che Tao-an", *Mélanges de Sinologie offerts à Monsieur Paul Demiéville*. vol. I, Paris, 1966, pp. 167–198 and vol. II, Paris, 1974, pp. 399–402, and Zheng Dekun 鄭德坤, *Shuijing zhu yin shu kao* 水經注引書考, Taibei, 1974, p. 94.

[38] Anonymous "Preface relating the history of the publication of the *Bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa*", *Biqiuni jieben suo chu benmo xu* 比丘尼戒本所出本末序 in T 2145 *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集, j. 11, 79b. Another colophon on the same work (*ib*., p. 81c) indicates that this description of five monasteries and three convents at Kucha reflects the situation of 379 CE.

[39] Biography of Kumārajīva in T 2145 *Chu sanzang ji ji*, j. 14, p. 100c.

[40] Cf. the list of 48 dated Chinese documents (including the four found by a Chinese archaeological team in 1980) in Hou Shan 侯燦, "Loulan xin faxian mujian zhiwenshu kaoshi" 樓蘭新發現木簡紙文書考釋, *Wenwu* 1988. 7, pp. 40–55, esp. p. 41. The earliest date, 252 CE, must be corrected into 264 CE, cf. J. Brough, op. cit., p. 602, note 74. The use of Gāndhārī prākrit and Kharoṣṭhī script for administrative purposes in Shanshan and Khotan proves that before the middle of the third century Kushan influence must have been very strong along the southern route. There is, however, no concrete evidence for an actual incorporation of Khotan and Shanshan into the Kushan empire, as proposed by J. Brough (cf. note 5 above) and by E. G. Pulleyblank ("Chinese Evidence for the Date of *Kaniṣka*", in A. L. Basham, op. cit., pp. 247–258). Gāndhārī was used as a *lingua franca*, also for commercial purposes, and many instances could be adduced to prove that the adoption of such a written medium by no means necessarily implies military occupation or political incorporation.

Both at Loulan and at Mirān many signs of early Buddhist activity have been found; on stylistic and palaeographic grounds (fragments of wall-paintings, and inscriptions in *Kharoṣṭhī* script on paintings and on a banner) they appear to belong to the same period as the written materials mentioned above, and therefore are not older than the second half of the third century.[41]

Khotan presents the same chronological picture. The earliest Buddhist relics—two bronze Buddha heads found by the Ōtani mission in 1902, are assigned to the third century.[42] An excavation made in 1979 at Mailike-awati, some 25 kilometres south of Khotan, at first raised the hope of having found Buddhist objects of an earlier period corresponding the the Eastern Han—a dating based upon the (rather shaky) evidence of a
[175] hoard of *wuzhu* coins found close to the *stūpa* site.[43] However, the illusion was dispelled by the result of C_{14} tests made on wood from the same site, which yielded 1400 ± 85 BP (with 1950 as the base-line), hence at the earliest ca. 400 CE—much later than Loulan and Mirān.[44]

The same is true of the only other Buddhist object from Xinjiang for which an Eastern Han date has been proposed: a fragment of cotton cloth adorned with a Buddhist image (probably a Bodhisattva) executed in batik technique; the fact that it was found together with a bronze mirror of late Han type led to the conclusion that both artefacts must be of that period.[45] However, as rightly observed by Ding Mingyi, the stylistic features of the image point to a much later date, in no case earlier than the third century.[46]

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41 For a survey see Kumagai Nobuo 熊谷宣夫, in Sai'iki bunka kenkyūkai 西域文化研究會 (comp.), *Chūō Ajia bukkyō bijutsu* 中央アジヤ佛教美術, Kyōto (Hōzōkan), 1963, pp. 51–58, and M. Yaldiz, op. cit., pp. 170–173. In 1980 an archaeological team again investigated the Loulan site previously explored and ransacked by Sven Hedin (1900) and Aurel Stein (1906), concentrating on the *stūpa* and the administrative building inside the walled enclosure and on the smaller *stūpa* northeast of the wall. The walled settlement no doubt existed already in the first century or early second century CE, but both *stūpas* are later, and appear to be contemporary with the earliest Buddhist materials from Mirān (second half of the third century). Cf. Xinjiang Loulan kaogu dui 新疆樓蘭考古隊, "Loulan gucheng diaocha yu shijue jianbao", 樓蘭古城調查與試掘簡報, *Wenwu* 1988. 7, pp. 1–20.

42 Kumagai, op. cit., pp. 72–75.

43 Cf. Li Yuchun 李遇春, "Xinjiang Hetian xian Mailike-awati yizhi de diaocha he shijue" 新疆和田縣實力克阿瓦提遺址的調查和試掘, *Wenwu* 1981. 1, pp. 33–37.

44 Result published in *Wenwu* 1982. 4.

45 Museum of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, "Xinjiang Minfengxian bei da shamo zhong gu yizhi muzangqu Dong Han hezangmu qingli baogao" 新僵民豐縣北大沙裏中古遺址墓葬區東漢合葬基墓清理報告, *Wenwu* 1960. 6, pp. 9–12.

46 Ding Mingyi 丁明夷, "Shilun Kongwangshan moya zaoxiang" 試論孔望山摩崖造像, *Wenwu* 1986. 10, pp. 940–949.

In other words: the archaeological record shows that even these sites (no doubt the oldest ones found so far) show no traces of institutionalized Buddhism in a period corresponding to the Eastern Han. No doubt a paradoxical situation—but again one that is fully confirmed by the Chinese written sources.

The earliest Chinese evidence refers to the year 260 CE, when the monk Zhu Shixing 朱士行 travelled to Khotan in search of the longer version of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. After he had obtained a manuscript, he dispatched the Khotanese monk *Puṇyadhana* (?) together with nine other monks to transport it to China; in 282 CE they arrived at Luoyang.[47] Nine years later, it was again a Khotanese monk, Mokṣala, who translated it into Chinese.[48] Around the same time (286 CE) the Khotanese master Gītamitra arrived at Changan.[49] The first description of Khotan as a flourishing centre of Buddhism is given by Faxian, who around 400 CE speaks about "four large and innumerable smaller monasteries" with "several tens of thousands of monks", and a royal house that sponsored the *saṅgha* on a grand scale.[50]

[176] The unanimous testimony of the archaeological data and the Chinese written sources leads us to conclude that at the time when Buddhism started to settle in China, in the first two centuries of our era, Serindia still was virtually untouched by monastic Buddhism. In Han China, Buddhism was spread by missionaries corning from the far west: Indoscythians, Sogdians, Parthians and Indians. Missionaries from the oasis kingdoms of present-day Xinjiang only start to appear in Chinese sources in the second half of the third century—which chronologically agrees with the date of the earliest remains found at Khotan, Niya, Mirān and Loulan. In the first two centuries of our era, Serindia appears to have functioned as no more than a transit zone. It is a paradox that is difficult to explain. However, at least a partial explanation may be found if we once more consider the spread of the *saṅgha* as a "parasitic institution" requiring a rather high level of economic development. Very little is known about the early history of oasis agriculture in present-day Xinjiang. However, it may be possible to reconstruct a least the main line of development by using the indirect evidence supplied by demographic data.

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47 Cf. *BC*, pp. 61–62; p. 340, n. 183; p. 341, n. 191 and n. 201.

48 *BC*, p. 63.

49 *BC*, p. 67.

50 T 2085, *Gaoseng Faxian zhuan* 高僧法顯傳, p. 857b.

IV. *Serindia in the First Century AD: A Big Leap Forward?*

Whatever we know of the demographic situation in present-day Xinjiang in the period under consideration is derived from two documents. The "Account of the Western Region" of the *Hanshu* (*HS*) contains a survey of official data reported to the central government by the Chinese "Protector-General" (*duhu* 都護) who in 59 CE, after the pacification of Central Asia, was stationed at Wulei 烏壘 (west of Karashahr). The data therefore cover a period of some sixty years, from the establishment of the Chinese headquarters at Wulei till the crisis around the beginning of our era, when China lost control of the Serindian kingdoms.[51] Part of the information given concerns the size of the population and of the number of able-bodied soldiers, and in view of the military and political importance of such figures, it may be assumed that their accuracy was a matter of concern both to the Chinese military command in Central Asia and to the central government.

[177] The second document, which has the same structure and appears to be closely patterned after the first one, is the "Account of the Western Regions" of the *Hou Han shu* (*HHS*).[52] It roughly contains the same kind of data, and reflects the situation of the early second century CE, after the second wave of Chinese expansion had run its course. Most of the intelligence was probably based on reports submitted by the general Ban Yong 班勇 during his tenure as "Senior Administrator of the Western Regions" (*Xiyu zhangshi* 西域長史) in the years 123–127 CE; the *HHS* account therefore generally bears upon a situation of roughly one century later than the one described in the *HS*.

In a number of cases demographic data referring to the same oasis states are given by both *HS* and *HHS*. It goes without saying that we have to handle these data in a cautious way. In the intervening century certain states may have grown by annexation of smaller neighbours, and even the method of surveying may have changed in the meantime. But even if we take such disturbing factors into account, the comparison between the *HS* and the *HHS* figures yields some surprising results.

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[51] *HS*, pp. 96A and MB; A. F. P. Hulsewé and M. A. N. Loewe, *China in Central Asia. The earliest stage: 725 B.C.—A.D. 23 An annotated translation of chapters 61 and 95 of the History of the Former Han Dynasty*, Leiden, 1979 (hereafter *CICA*).

[52] *HHS*, j. 88. Annotated translation by Edouard Chavannes, "Les pays d'Occident d'après le *Heou Han chou*", *T'oung Pao* 8 (1907), pp. 149–234.

(1) In nine cases such a comparison can be made.[53] The total population of these nine centres was according to *HS* (around the beginning of our era) 14,311 households; somewhat more than a century later *HHS* reports a total of 83,123 households—an increase of more than 580%. In the same period the number of able-bodied soldiers rises from 20,066 to 93,460, i.e. nearly 470%.

(2) Both on the northern and on the southern branch of the Silk Road, the growth of the larger oasis states is quite spectacular: Khotan rises from 3,300 to 32,000 households (969%); Karashahr from 4,000 to 25,000 (375%); "Nearer" and "Further" Jushi (–the Turfan region) from 1,295 to 4,500 (424%), and Kashgar from 1,510 to 21,000—an increase of 1,390%.[54]

The demographic data clearly indicate an almost explosive increase of the [178] population in the oasis states, the number of inhabitants on the average being multiplied by a factor five, and in some cases even much more. In a pre-industrial age, such a demographic upsurge can only have taken place if it was accompanied by a very considerable growth of the agrarian production, and in the situation of an oasis economy dependent on a limited supply of water, this in turn must have been the result of the introduction of superior agricultural techniques, notably advanced methods of water storage and irrigation that would lead to a drastic expansion of the cultivated area.

Since early times the oasis settlements engaged in agriculture, making use of the seasonal supply of melting water from the mountain ranges along the northern and southern border of the Taklamakan desert. The people grew millet and wheat, and probably also various kinds of fruits. However, without the use of advanced techniques of intensive agriculture and water-conservancy by which the water could be distributed over a large area, the oasis agriculture remained underdeveloped, and only could support a very limited population—which is the picture presented by the

[53] Yumi 于彌 (*HHS*: Jumi 拘彌; Karadon, between Niya and Khotan); Yutian 于闐 (Khotan); Xiye 西夜 and Zihe 子合 (combined in *HS*, listed separately in *HHS*; in the Yarkand region); Shule 疏勒 (Kashgar); Yanqi 焉耆 (Karashahr): Pulei 蒲類 (near Lake Barköl); Eastern Jumi 東且彌 (cast of Manass); "Nearer" and "Further" Jushi 車師前(後)都 (both in the Turfan area).

[54] *Khotan; HS* j. 96A, p. 3881, *CICA* p. 97; *HHS* j. 88, p. 2915; Chavannes, op. cit., p. 171; *Karashahr: HS* j. 96A, p. 3917, *CICA* p. 178; *HHS* j. 88, p. 2927, Chavannes, op. cit., p. 208; *Turfan: HS* j. 96B, p. 3921, *CICA* pp. 183–184; *HHS* j. 88, p. 2929, Chavannes, op. cit., pp. 210–211; *Kashgar: HS* j. 96A, p. 3898, *CICA* p. 141; *HHS* j. 88, p. 2926, Chavannes, op. cit., p. 201.

HS account. The average size of each of the 34 "states" east of the Pamir that are listed in the *HS* account is 877 households; twelve of these are not larger than 100 households, and four "states" actually are minuscule settlements of only some dozens (40 to 99) households. The impression of low-level agricultural development is confirmed by the (unfortunately rather scarce) archaeological findings, that suggest a mixed economy in which animal husbandry still played a very important role, and a material culture that shows much affinity with that of the nomadic tribes of the steppe.[55]

It is, of course, hazardous to ascribe the agrarian expansion of the first century of our era to a single cause; it probably was the result of a combi-
[179] nation of factors. However, it is very probable that one factor has played a very important stimulating and innovating role: the dissemination of the Chinese type of intensive irrigated agriculture throughout Central Asia through the system of Chinese military agricultural colonies (*tuntian* 屯田). The phenomenon is well-known from Chinese sources, and material remains of such agricultural projects have in recent times also been found at various sites.

V. *The Dissemination of Chinese-Type Agriculture*

The *tuntian* colonies had originally been established along the northern *limes* of China; the system was designed to safeguard the food-supply for the Chinese garrisons by employing large numbers of "agricultural conscripts" (*tianzu* 田卒). However, already during the first stage of Chinese expansion in Central Asia the system was extended to some strategic points in the Western Regions in order to supply the frequent Chinese diplomatic missions and the Chinese garrisons (a fact that, incidentally, confirms the picture of agricultural underdevelopment in the oasis states).

The first *tuntian* colonies were established around 100 BCE at Luntai 輪臺 and Quli 渠犁 (both east of Kucha,[56] along the northern route). In the following decades the system was continuously expanded. Sometimes

[55] Cf. Folke Bergman, *Archaeological Researches in Sinkiang*, vol. II, Stockholm, 1939, pp. 60–98 (necropolis of the second/first century BCE at Loulan); cf. also Kumagai Nobuo, op. cit., pp. 35–40); "Jianguo yilai Xinjiang kaogu de zhuyao shouhuo" 建國以來新疆考古的主要收穫, in *Wenwu kaogu gangzuo sanshi nian* 文物考古工作三十年, comp. by 文物編輯委員會, Beijing (文物出版社) 1979, pp. 171–172 (tombs of the last centuries BCE near Hami); *ib.*, p. 172 and 173 (tombs in the Urumchi region).

[56] *HS* 96A, p. 3873; *CICA* p. 76.

native leaders were employed; thus, around 70 BCE a prince of Wumi 扜彌 (northeast of Khotan), who had stayed at the Chinese court as a hostage, was made a colonel and despatched to enlarge the agricultural colony at Luntai.[57] Other colonies were established in the oasis centres of Hami and Turfan; the latter became the seat of the Chinese "*wu* and *ji* colonel" (戊己校尉), a function that was created in 48 BCE to supervise the material support of the Chinese forces and the management of the *tuntian* colonies.[58] The system was even introduced in the most distant regions: in 52 BCE Chinese conscripts were put to work in the territory of the Wusun 烏孫, south of Issyk-köl.[59] In Yixun 伊循 (Mirān) the first fields were reclaimed in 77 BCE at the request of the local ruler; after a modest start the irrigation was much enlarged by a Chinese commander from Dunhuang, who executed a large project employing a combined labour force of 4,000 men from Dunhuang, Shanshan, Karashahr, and Kucha—
[180] an amazing feat of planning and logistics. He had dikes built and canals dug, and so was able to irrigate a large area that after three years had yielded an enormous store of surplus grain.[60]

Remains of such ancient irrigation networks have been found by Chinese archaeologists, in the Lop Nor region and elsewhere: ditches and canals (in ope case a canal of eight metres wide and traceable over a distance of more than a hundred kilometres), roads, paths, and traces of cultivated fields. The Chinese documents from Niya repeatedly refer to the activities of "water officials" (*shuicao* 水曹) and the organization of the work, including the inspection of the dikes.[61] Orchards also have left some traces. At Niya remains were found of plantations of peaches and apricots (both of Chinese origin),[62] as well as the desiccated trunks of mulberry trees.[63]

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[57] *HS* 96B, p. 3916; *CICA* p. 174.

[58] *HS* j. 96A, p. 3874; *CICA* p. 79.

[59] *HS* j. 69 (biography of Xin Qingji 辛慶忌), p. 2996.

[60] *Shuijing zhu shu* (cf. above, n. 47), j. 2, p. 18b.

[61] Cf. Huang Wenbi 黄文弼, *Luobunuo'er kaogu ji* 羅布淖爾考古記, Beijing, 1948, pp. 111–112; Meng Chi 孟池, "Cong Xinjiang lishi wenwu kan Handai zai Xiyu de zhengzhi cuoshi he jingji jianshe" 從新疆歷史文物看漢代在西城的政治措施和經濟建設, *Wenwu* 1975. 7, pp. 27–34; Wang Zhusheng 在生, "Han Jin Xiyu yu zuguo wenming" 漢晉西域與祖國文明, *Kaogu xuebao* 1977. 1, p. 23, p. 42 (esp. pp. 24–28); Zhang Rongfang 慶象新, "Xi Han tuntian yu 'sichou zhi lu' " 西漢屯田與'絲綢之路' ", *Zhongguo shi yanjin* 1983. 4, pp. 13–24.

[62] Cf. Wang Zhusheng, op. cit., p. 28.

[63] Cf. *Shiruku-rōdo* シルク・ロード(絲綢の路), Tokyo, 日本放送出版社, 1986, vol. 3, ill. 5, 20 and 30.

During the second period of Chinese domination that started around the beginning of the second century CE, the *tuntian* system was maintained; Hami became the seat of a "commandant grain manager", *yihe duwei* 宜禾都尉. However, it was applied on a much smaller scale, mainly because of the enormous expenses involved.

Chinese historians have emphasized the important role played by the *tuntian* colonies in the economic development of Central Asia, without, however, relating this to the spectacular population growth that must have taken place in the next period. It is important to note that at least in some cases the indigenous elite was involved in it—a participation that must have facilitated the adoption of Chinese techniques.

All this suggests that the *tuntian* colonies may have been a stimulating factor (and perhaps even the decisive one) in the transition from a primitive to a highly developed oasis agriculture in the major kingdoms of Serindia. If our interpretation of the contrasting demographic data in *HS* and
[181] *HHS* is acceptable as a working hypothesis, it follows that that process was in full swing in the early second century CE. This would explain the late appearance of Buddhism. In the course of the second century the qualitative change in agriculture, coupled with an almost explosive population growth, must have paved the way for further developments: urbanization, a flourishing trade, and the formation of a prosperous urban elite. Thus, conditions were being created under which monastic Buddhism could establish itself Around the middle of the third century it had started to fill the Serindian vacuum, as is testified by the earliest, and still very modest, Buddhist architectural remains at Loulan and Mirān.

VI. *Han Buddhism and Serindia: The Prenatal Stage*

In the light of the evidence presented above, it appears that some commonly held views regarding the first transmission of Buddhism to China have to be revised, and that this in turn affects our perspective of Han Buddhism as a whole.

In the first place, we are struck by the very early appearance of Buddhist practices in China (65 CE). In an Asian context this is most surprising, for it coincides with the very first phase of Buddhist expansion in the Kushan empire, and the establishment of the monastic community at Luoyang (ca. 150 CE) is roughly contemporary with the earliest Buddhist sites in western Central Asia. The introduction of Buddhism was by no means the last stage in a gradual process of diffusion; it was part of the

one huge wave of expansion that simultaneously carried Buddhism to the Ferghana valley and the North China plain.

It is equally surprising—at least at first sight—that for almost two centuries Serindia appears to have played the role of a neutral transit zone, in spite of the existing lines of communication between east and west. The founding fathers of the Church of Luoyang were not Kucheans or Khotanese, but monks from the far western periphery. In other words: Han Buddhism was in a certain way an anomalous phenomenon: it was not the result of contact expansion but of "long-distance transmission".

This may account for some of its typical features. Contact expansion is characterized by proximity, continuity, and feedback; not only individual elements of a religious system are transmitted but also coherent complexes: an integrated doctrine, a body of scriptures, a complicated organization, retaining much of their original content This is, in fact, what
[182] happened in Chinese Buddhism since the second half of the third century CE, when the oasis states had become strongholds of Buddhism.

Long-distance transmission has quite different features: contact is incidental and intermittent; communications are difficult, and there is no feed-back. The transmission is defective and can easily take the form of an unsystematic borrowing of elements that are largely detached from their original context, and therefore easily are changed beyond recognition in their new cultural environment. This is, indeed, the general picture of Han Buddhism: extreme hybridization, the diffuse incorporation of disparate elements, no coherent complexes of doctrines or scriptures, but rather a random collection of single translated texts.

It was only in the late third century that Chinese Buddhism became an organized religious system with a body of regularly ordained Chinese monks (it is significant that the basic ordination formulary was only translated around 250 CE!), and this "real start" was largely result of the Buddhist conquest of Serindia that had taken place not long before. Rather than being treated as the first, heroic period of Buddhism in China, Han Buddhism should be regarded, even more than we realized before, as its embryonic stage.

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THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN IMPERIAL CHINA: SPONTANEOUS DIFFUSION VERSUS GUIDED PROPAGATION

Any attempt to compare Chinese Buddhism during its formative phase (from the 4th to the 6th centuries CE) and 17th-century Chinese Christianity as propagated by Jesuit missionaries might at first sight appear vain and artificial. Doctrinally, the two religions are hardly comparable for, even if they can be put together under the general term "doctrines of salvation", the fact that in the two systems the very notion of salvation is formulated in entirely different and even incompatible terms makes any effort of comparative analysis fanciful.

From one point of view, which could be called quantitative, the contrast is even more obvious. In the course of the 4th to the 6th centuries, [12] China was truly conquered by Buddhism and the foreign religion became firmly entrenched in all parts of China and at all levels of society, both in the North, which was then occupied by invaders of "barbarian" origin, as in the South, where autochthonous dynasties succeeded one another. In 589 CE when, after centuries of division, Chinese territory was reunified under the Sui, Buddhism had become the most important and the most creative current in Chinese civilization. The absorption and digestion of this Indian doctrine of salvation had led to the rise of various indigenous "schools"; thousands of Buddhist temples and monasteries dotted the landscape, and there were hundreds of thousands of monks and nuns and millions of lay believers. In comparison with this "success story", 17th-century Christianity in China was an absolutely marginal phenomenon. It was just a few dozen Jesuits, surrounded by groups of *literati* attracted by the religion coming from Europe. The movement of conversion started shortly before 1600 and had already begun to decline during the 18th century. At its height, it counted at most some 300,000 converts out of a total population of about 140 million—less than one quarter of one percent.

It may be asked, however, whether the importance of a historical phe- [13] nomenon should always be judged by its size. After all, it constituted the first encounter, on a high intellectual level, between China and European culture at the dawn of the modern era, or rather, between China and the Jesuit interpretation of certain elements of that culture, a particular pre-

sentation of Catholic doctrine adapted to Chinese needs, combined with certain elements of European science, technology and art. But what is most interesting about such an encounter is that through it cultures as well as individuals express and reveal their moral and intellectual presuppositions. It allows what would otherwise have remained concealed to be made explicit. Even before Christianity, Buddhism had already played this revelatory role. In recent years, attention has been drawn to these matters in several studies, among which special mention is to be made of the brilliant work of Jacques Gernet, *Chine et christianisme, action et réaction* [*China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures*]. It presented, for the first time, a comprehensive overview of these contacts, mainly as seen from the Chinese side.

Whoever seeks to examine the history of the penetration of Buddhism during the 4th to the 6th centuries together with that of the undertaking of the first Jesuit mission in the 17th century is bound to be intrigued by a crucial question: why did Buddhism become a permanent force in Chi-
[14] nese culture, whereas Christianity never became more than a temporary and marginal phenomenon?

This question becomes even more baffling if we look at the context of these two encounters of China with foreign religions and if we compare these visitors from another world: on the one hand, Buddhist monks from Central Asia and India, on the other Jesuits coming from nearly all Roman Catholic countries of Europe. No contrast could be deeper: there were basic differences in their social level, education, selection as missionaries, and contact with the homeland.

The Buddhist monks came from many different centres, from various parts of the Buddhist world. Their number is not known, as the sources only mention the most eminent among them.[1] In the course of their itinerant lives, they arrived in China, travelling through Central Asia behind the caravans, or they disembarked in some port in southern China, having come across the sea, or sometimes they were even taken as booty in a

[1] In our biographical sources, most notably the large collections of "Lives of Eminent Monks" (*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 and its sequels), information about foreign monks is exclusively confined to the category of "translators of canonical texts". On the other hand, all Chinese literature of this period abounds in passages in which "barbarian monks" (*huseng* 胡僧) are mentioned in several roles, and often those of magicians or prophets endowed with supernatural powers. On the limitations of the genre of the Buddhist biography, cf. our remarks in "Perspectives in the Study of Chinese Buddhism", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1982.2, pp. 161–176.

military expedition. We only rarely learn something about their previous education and training. In a few cases the sources mention that they had studied certain texts at such-and-such a monastery. They were certainly never selected for anything like a "Buddhist mission", and most of them probably could not foresee that they would end their days in China.[2] They
[15] came with their sacred texts on their backs or recorded in their memory, but they were unable to translate these themselves, for generally they did not know Chinese: the work of translation was a laborious task, performed with the help of interpreters and Chinese assistants. And, apart from some very rare cases, contact with the world they came from had been broken off. There was no "home front" that supplied them with texts and icons, or supported them from a distance with directives and guidance. On the other hand, there was no reporting from China to the home front, to inform the religious authorities and the public about the successes and setbacks of the Buddha's Law in far-away Mahā-Cīna.

If we compare these roaming monks with our Jesuits, no contrast could be more striking. The latter constituted a well-organized intellectual elite: they were like the brain-trust of the Counter-Reformation. They had received a very demanding and many-sided education in rhetorics, philosophy, scholastics and theology, often combined with sound scientific knowledge in domains such as mathematics, astronomy or even medicine. A particularly rigorous selection procedure was applied for missions to East Asia, and some candidates for the China mission were refused two or three times before being admitted. After their arrival in Macao, they again had to undergo an intensive training programme in Chinese
[16] that comprised even the acquisition of classical Chinese. Knowledge of this literary language was indispensable for three reasons. In the first place, it was part of the so-called "accommodation" strategy conceived by early Jesuits, according to which the Fathers should adapt themselves as much as possible to the culture of the Chinese intellectual elite, which naturally required a sound knowledge of classical Chinese. Secondly, it served to enable them to use quotations from the Confucian classics in propagating and defending the Christian faith. Finally, it served to maintain control over the work of translation of European texts and the

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2 An interesting exception, however, is the arrival at Canton in 429 of a group of Sinhalese nuns who had come to China along the sea route in order to introduce the authentic tradition of the nuns' order. (T 2063, *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳, j. 2, p. 939c and 941a; j. 3, p. 942b).

production of their own texts in Chinese, for their publications had to bear, as in the West, the formula—which was of course translated into Chinese—*nihil obstat, imprimatur.*[3]

They had their own reliable channel of communication from Macao to Goa, and hence to the Superior General's headquarters in Rome, and there was a regular flow of letters and messages in both directions. The home front was perfectly informed about everything that happened in China through "annual reports" (*litterae annuae*) that not only contained information about the various mission-posts in China, but also accounts, sometimes very perceptive, of current events and political developments.[4] The home front in Europe reacted to these messages and sometimes consequently changed the given guidelines. The public at large showed great
[17] interest in the mission. The *Expeditio Christiana apud Sinas* by Nicolas Trigault, published in 1615, immediately became a best-seller that was translated into several languages and read all over Europe. The missionary field was also regularly supplied with materials: books, paintings and engravings, scientific instruments and so on. The same Trigault, when he visited Europe to defend the "accommodation" strategy in Rome, made use of his short stay to make a kind of "promotion trip" to several European courts. He returned with no less than 7,000 western books which, for the standards of that time, formed a very large library, and did not fail to impress Chinese scholars.[5]

Thus, less and less do we understand the different fates that Buddhism and Christianity had in China. Why did nondescript, unprepared, unselected Buddhist monks succeed in winning a whole world for Buddhism, whereas the *expeditio christiana*, carefully prepared and led by highly qualified specialists, only had very modest success and in the end became a failure?

Naturally there have been attempts to answer this question, and several explanations have been offered.

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[3] The works published by Chinese converts escaped this form of ecclesiastical approbation. This system is described in very positive terms by Giulio Aleni (Ai Rulüe艾儒略) in his "Geography of the outside world", *Zhifang waiji* 職方外記 (Hangzhou, 1628), j. 2, p. 4[b].

[4] Cf. Joseph Dehergne S.J., "Les Lettres Annuelles des missions jésuites de Chine au temps des Ming (1582–1644)", *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 49 (1980), pp. 379–392.

[5] Cf. E. Lamalle S.J., "La propagande du P. Nicolas Trigault en faveur des missions de China (1616)", *A.H.S.I.* 9 (1940), pp. 49–120; P. Brunner, *l'Euchologie de la mission de China: editio princeps 1628 et développements jusqu'à nos jours*, Münster, Westf., 1964; F. Bontinck, *La lutte autour de la liturgie chinoise aux XVII[e] et XVIII[e] siècles*, Louvain, 1962.

One answer is found mainly in the works of the Jesuits themselves since
[18] the 17th century and until recent times. In their view, the mission always had to face the hostility of xenophobic and conservative elements, it was oppressed by stubborn, narrow-minded mandarins who would not see the Light, and it had to bear the jealousy of Buddhist monks (usually called "bonzes" in this type of publications). Nevertheless, the missionaries had succeeded in gaining the ear and the confidence of the emperor. But it was all spoiled by the famous "Rites Controversy", the organized resistance waged by other Christian orders against the Jesuit accommodation strategy. After interminable disputes, the entire agitation ended with the formal prohibition of that strategy, imposed by the Pope and proclaimed in China through apostolic legates. In other words: the Jesuit mission failed because others (both Chinese authorities and western adversaries) made it fail and suffocated it.

This explanation is both one-sided and superficial. The persecution of Christianity in China during the 17th and 18th centuries was, after all, not such a dramatic affair. There were indeed some incidental anti-Christian campaigns, but none were very severe or long lasting, and there also were many cases of protection. Despite all efforts, chroniclers have been unable to find any single Jesuit martyr in the annals of the Chinese mission. The Rites Controversy was no doubt a fierce battle, but it was almost exclusively fought in Europe, and the Chinese, even the converts, obviously had no idea what happened at the Theological Faculty of the Sorbonne.
[19] Only at the end of the 17th century was there the great imprudence to get the Chinese court involved, which settled it, but at that time the Jesuit mission was already declining, and the Rites Controversy only hastened the process.

A second explanation stresses the cultural isolation of China during the last two dynasties and what has been called "sinocentrism", that is, the traditional idea that China is the only centre of true civilization. As a foreign doctrine, Christianity was in principle considered unacceptable, and it was held to be inferior by the very fact that it was non-Chinese. On the other hand, Buddhism at the time was a fully assimilated religion which, after fifteen centuries, had lost any association with its non-Chinese origins. It should be noted, however—against this explanation—that the political disorder which prevailed at the end of the Ming dynasty had resulted both in a weakening of the ideological control exercised by the state and in an opening up of the cultured elite to new ideas. This only changed under the Qing dynasty, a dynasty that was founded by Manchu invaders whose suspicious and despotic regime adopted a stricter attitude

towards foreigners and re-established all instruments of control. The state would thus favour a strict Confucian orthodoxy. Due to this, the climate
[20] was unfavourable to any movement that was considered heterodox, particularly Christianity.

This second explanation is thus only partly true. "Sinocentrism" has undoubtedly played an important role. In the many anti-Christian treatises and pamphlets, the "doctrine of the Lord of Heaven" is rejected not only because it is absurd and subversive, but also because it is a product of "outer barbarians" (*waiyi* 外夷). By accepting it, China would surrender to barbarism. It is also true that by the 18th century the attitude of the state towards Christianity had hardened. But the argument according to which Buddhism had already become totally assimilated does not hold, for it only shifts the problem to an earlier period when it was not yet so well digested. In fact, if we turn to the first centuries of the spread of Buddhism to China, we find exactly the same "sinocentric" points of criticism: Buddhism is the primitive product of superstitious barbarians, a bastardized form of Daoism, perhaps useful for Indians, but unacceptable for Chinese; therefore it has to be discarded as quickly as possible.[6] This hostility, which has its basis in a cultural ethnocentrism, was for a long time a constant in the history of Chinese Buddhism, and it incited persecutions that were much more severe than those which Christianity ever underwent. Despite this, Buddhism continued to grow. "Sinocentrism" thus certainly
[21] was one of the causes of the difficulties faced by Christianity in China, but one cannot attribute its failure to this alone.

A third aspect of the matter has been brought to light by Jacques Gernet in his aforementioned book. This concerns the modes of thought and the almost insurmountable incompatibility that existed between the most fundamental philosophical and religious ideas of Christianity and those of the Chinese tradition. According to this point of view, the essential notions and ideas of Christianity could not be accepted as such because they could not be integrated into the Chinese world view. This concerns the entire fundamental dogmatics of Christianity: a single God, creator, all-powerful and jealous, who does not tolerate any other god next to him, even less an entire bureaucratic pantheon of the Chinese type; a single and complete creation of the universe, at one point in time, by a conscious act of God's will, not, as according to the Chinese

6 Cf. the overview of sinocentric arguments that I have given in *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, Leiden, 1959, pp. 264–280.

conception of the course of Nature, a continual and impersonal process of transformation; the existence in man of one immaterial and immortal soul, burdened by Original Sin and only to be saved by the grace of God; the separate creation of man as a unique being, standing in opposition to the rest of nature, as the special object of God's grace, not like the Chinese conception of man as a part of Nature; a divine plan for the redemption of mankind, the incarnation of the Saviour and His resurrection, that
[22] seemed unnecessarily complicated and arbitrary to the Chinese; the ritual of the Eucharist in which man partakes of Divine Grace by consuming his body, which in the eyes of the Chinese was an incomprehensible form of theophagy, a practice which was naturally repulsive to the Chinese, in spite of their great culinary tradition.

This conflict between cultures, this opposition between two conceptions of the world and of man, as emphasized by J. Gernet, has no doubt been a very important factor, and certainly constitutes a very important dimension of the problem. Time and again, we see how Christianity is attacked, precisely on those points. But it has to be pointed out, first of all, that the history of Christianity in China shows remarkable exceptions: there are cases of complete acceptance of all Christian dogmas, of a sometimes amazing insight into the doctrine,[7] of sincere devotion, and even of fanaticism. Secondly, if we go back in time ten or fifteen centuries, we find a situation similar to that of Christianity in the 17th century, for the Buddhist doctrine of salvation also contained at least as many elements that conflicted with fundamentals of Chinese thought. Before the arrival of Buddhism, any idea comparable to *nirvāṇa*, as the destruction of all attachment and as the final extinction of all individual existence, was unknown, as even the greatest immortals kept an ethereal body and a personal identity. The notion of *karma*, the strictly individual retribution
[23] of any conscious act, was in contradiction with the Chinese conception of shared responsibility. And above all, it was very difficult for the Chinese to accept the institution that was at the very heart of the Buddhist religion, the *saṅgha*, the monastic order, a community of celibates who have left the world and even their family, people who do not marry and who lead

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[7] There are surprising examples of this in the "Diary of Oral Admonitions" (*Kouduo richao* 口鐸日鈔) which contains extracts of conversations and notes on the life of the great missionary Giulio Aleni (1582–1649) at Fujian 福建. The work, which forms a unique document on the practice of the religious life in the *milieu* of Christian scholars at the time, was compiled from a series of fragments by Li Jiubiao 李九標 between February 1631 and July 1640. [See now E. Zürcher, *Kouduo richao: Li Jiubiao's Diary of Oral Admonitions: A Late Ming Christian Journal.* Monumenta Serica Monograph Series LVI/1–2. Nettetal, 2007.]

an "alternative" way of life with its own disciplinary rules, people who are parasitic since they do not engage in productive labour, and who even claim complete autonomy (in the political sense) for the monastery, for the *saṅgha* is in principle not subject to the ruler's authority. It is difficult to imagine a more radical opposition than that which existed between Buddhism and the indigenous traditions of China. Yet, China was able to absorb Buddhism. Cultures thus appear to have great flexibility, a certain "free margin of operation" in which they can absorb ideas from outside, even ideas that are opposed to their most basic assumptions. This again proves that the limited success of Christianity in 17th-century China cannot wholly be ascribed to some kind of "intellectual incompatibility".

So the question still stands. The explanations given so far differ in validity and are all partial answers. But this is inevitable: the absorption of an entire complex of ideas, practices and institutions of foreign origin by a given culture is a process that is so complicated and so poorly understood that a complete explanation will never be found. Therefore, I intend to add to those that have already been given another partial explanation that emphasizes the important role of institutions and organization, as well
[24] as the striking differences in the ways in which Buddhism and Christianity spread in China. The contrast can be summarized in a few words: "spontaneous diffusion versus guided propagation" or "the establishment of monastic life versus the salvation of souls" or even, less enigmatically, "the dissemination of an institution versus the propagation of a faith". I believe that this opposition is fundamental, and that it has had far-reaching consequences for the viability of Buddhism and Christianity in premodern China.

Let us first turn to the Buddhist side. The way in which Buddhism has spread is a school example of what is called "contact expansion"—the way in which the roots or the branches of a tree expand, by gradually moving outward, constantly developing new shoots and filaments that penetrate into new territory and fill up the empty spaces. The Buddhist monastic system is characterized by an automatic mechanism of growth that probably dates back to the time when the first sedentary communities of monks were formed. Economically speaking, such groups are parasitic. They are mendicant monks, living from gifts, even for their daily food. The territory of such a community is the *sīmā*, the "begging circuit", the boundaries of which are defined by the distance a mendicant monk can cover by foot on
[25] his daily begging round. It thus has a fixed maximum size. However, since every successful community tends to grow, and because in every premodern economy there is only a very small margin of surplus production

to support such a parasitic group, a natural process of "moving out" will start with the growth of the *saṅgha*. Surplus monks will wander away, along the main commercial routes, where they will establish new communities in the most suitable places—in a prosperous agrarian region, or near a big city, at the crossroads of the major routes, at holy places that attract pilgrims, in short, places where there are many prosperous families who, once converted, will be *dānapati*s, "lords of gifts", pious laymen who support the *saṅgha*.

This process is repeated countless times. Thus the monastic system spreads, at first in India and then beyond, for "lords of gifts" are also to be found among the merchants who cross the seas in ships and the deserts of Central Asia with caravans. And there, in new regions, the process will start again, gradually and without drawing much attention. The process is mechanical, continuous and very effective, but it is not guided. It is an amorphous process that is not subject to the directives of any leading clerical authority, as there is no centre, no coordination. Much depends on chance: wherever the surplus monks find a place where they can live quietly and win the support of laymen, a new nucleus will appear. In the first
[26] stages, the expansion takes place on a low social level, with small groups. But later on, after Buddhism has penetrated the elite and the court, a top layer of large rich monasteries emerges, with extensive landed property to support them, and with large numbers of resident monks. They constitute the clerical elite and their monasteries are also the centres of higher Buddhist culture.

It is in this way, through an organically expanding network of communities and monasteries—i.e., at the institutional level—that Buddhism spreads all over the Asian continent. It is also in this way, slowly and almost imperceptibly, that it penetrates China at the beginning of our era. Also then, the expansion of the *saṅgha* was the determining factor. The tradition says that Chinese Buddhism started with the foundation of a monastery, the "White Horse Monastery" (*Baima si* 白馬寺) near Luoyang, not with any "conversion of the heathen Chinese". And the only concrete piece of evidence for this early community is an inscription written in Middle Indic. It figures on the coping of a well and says that this well is at the disposition of the "monastic order of all the directions".[8] During the first three centuries of our era, the dissemination of Buddhism in

[8] Cf. J. Brough, "A Kharoṣṭhī inscription from China", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24 (1961), pp. 517–530.

[27] China occurs at grass-roots level. But by the 5th century, Buddhism begins to reach the elites and, around 400 CE, the first large monasteries are established. Enriched by large donations, they continue to develop while deploying many kinds of social and economic activities, such as monastic landed property, welfare, accumulation of capital, organization of fairs, pawnshops, book-printing, and the exploitation of monasteries as hotels and restaurants.

Due to all this, Buddhism in China became a strong religious power that derived its strength from the remarkable institution that is the monastery. It is also the reason for its resistance and survival, as the monastery-temple (the two are interchangeable) is the sole Chinese institution that has survived for two thousand years in spite of periodic persecutions. But the most remarkable thing is that this great religious power established itself without any form of steering or guidance from one centre. Chinese Buddhism has always remained an ocean of innumerable separate centres, large and small, of very different social levels, the largest supported by the court and inhabited by cultured monks, the smallest vegetating in the villages and occupied by a few illiterate monks. In sum: great institutional force, coupled with organizational weakness.

We cannot imagine a greater contrast than that between that disor-
[28] ganized, polycentric infiltration of Buddhism and the guided process of the *expeditio christiana* of our Jesuits in 17th-century China. Organizationally speaking, it was perfect and quite impressive: in the 17th century few other large-scale operations have been so carefully thought out and prepared, so attentively followed, and executed with such dedication and prudence. However, institutionally speaking, the mission point—a small church and a residence inhabited by one or two missionaries and their Chinese assistants—formed an extremely weak basis, much weaker than the Buddhist monastery with its communal structure. This was unavoidable, however, because the Jesuits were by no means a monastic order and their secular role was reinforced by their adoption of the Chinese scholar's way of life.[9] As they constantly emphasized the contrast between this way

[9] The only traditional institutions that lent themselves to being "christianized" by developing variants of Christian inspiration were the charitable associations founded by scholars, and often inspired by Buddhist ideals. For a very interesting example of the transformation of such a Buddhist foundation into a Christian association, see N. Standaert, *Yang Tingyun, Confucian and Christian in Late Ming China*, Leiden, 1988, pp. 62–69.

of life and that of the Buddhist "bonzes", the last thing they would think of would be establishing monasteries.

Consequently, the local centre remained very weak: it was no more than a place of ritual, preaching, and discussion. In this way it remained a small *Fremdkörper*, an alien body, even more so because the missionary strategy excluded the formation of Chinese priests. But also economically it was very vulnerable because the Church only partially relied on the gifts of Chinese converts and it remained largely dependent upon funds from Macao. Landed property, the key to any position of economic stability in
[29] China, was never acquired by the Church. From an institutional point of view, therefore, the Jesuit mission shows a completely different picture than that of Buddhism. The process of conversion itself was also entirely different: it was not a contact-expansion but a long-distance expansion; not a branching-out but an injection; not a firm economic basis but supply of funds from outside, through a kind of umbilical cord by which the Church remained attached to the outer world.

In the spread of Buddhism, the lack of coordination had another very important effect. It led to a great plurality of forms, for in each region and in each locality, the doctrine and the rites were deeply influenced by local traditions, and this could go on unchecked because there was no centre that could correct certain trends or impose uniformity. Innumerable local non-Buddhist cults could thus be freely incorporated; all kinds of mixed forms and syncretic beliefs could take shape. This uncontrolled diversification, this free adaptation to the local milieu, has played an essential part in the vitality of Buddhism. The freedom to mix with local traditions also meant that it could become firmly rooted everywhere without radical resistance: every local community could recognize itself in it.

[30] As is well known, the same process of spontaneous adaption occurred in Western Christianity during medieval times. It was precisely by incorporating practices and beliefs of heathen origin that it became popularized. But after the Council of Trent, the point of departure of the Counter-Reformation, the Church abjured the medieval heritage: the religion that was preached by the Jesuits in China in the 17th century is a strict and doctrinal Christianity, imposed on the missionaries by the Church and on the Chinese by the missionaries. That is the direct result of the "Christian expedition" as a guided enterprise. In spite of all tolerance for Chinese customs, the accommodation had its limits set by orthodox control, and under the robe of the scholar hid the cassock of the moderator. The Roman authorities prohibited any effort that they considered to be too audacious,

as was the case when the Jesuits asked for the authorization to celebrate the Holy Mass in Chinese (when, in fact, they had already produced a complete printed edition of the *Missale Romanum* in Chinese).[10] Giulio Aleni was embarrassed by the *literati*'s obligation—even when they had converted—to go on paying homage to the tutelary deities guarding the fortifications and ditches of the city (the *chenghuang* 城隍), part of their official duties, failing which they would have to resign from office. And when to that end he found the ingenuous solution of identifying these spirits with the Christian guardian angels, the move was prohibited by an order from Rome.[11] But apart from such external pressures, a tendency towards uniformity was present among missionaries themselves, which prevented the development of local Christian cults. Such living traditions were flourishing: some documents show how easily Christian beliefs and practices could have taken root, though indeed they were far from ortho-
[31] dox, being based on local exorcist and demonological traditions. But as soon as they had taken shape, they were condemned and crushed by the weight of an imposed, uniform dogmatism. To give just one interesting and telling example: in 1638, in Nanjing, when a local medium spontaneously received supernatural messages of a Christian nature, probably using the traditional practice of automatic writing in sand with a *planchette*, he started to exhort people to adore the Lord of Heaven (i.e., the Christian God). These sessions of spiritism, a very common practice in Chinese popular religion, soon developed into a confessional cult, based on the belief that the apostle Saint Philip from time to time would descend from heaven to perform the absolution to the believers. But this cult, of an entirely traditional kind, was not to last long: when Father Sambiasi, a veteran Jesuit missionary with some twenty-five years of experience in China, heard about it, he hastened to this lost herd, and promptly abolished "those satanic practices" (*quelle diavolerie*).[12] Imposed uniformity and suppression of any variety and any adaptation to local traditions is the unavoidable effect of an expansion that is controlled from outside, and whose agents themselves fight any deviance.

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[10] Cf. J. Jennes C.I.C.M., "A propos de la liturgie chinoise. Le bref *Romanae Sedis Antistes* de Paul V (1615)", *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 2 (1946), pp. 241–254.

[11] Cf. *Kouduo richao* II.20 and VIII.2. The prohibition is reported by L. Pfister S.J., *Notices biographiques et bibliographiques sur les Jésuites de l'ancienne mission de Chine*, Shanghai, 1932/34, p. 140, n. 1. For Pfister, Aleni does not play any role: it is the "Christian mandarins" who assimilated the *chenghuang* into the guardian angels of the walled cities in order to make their cult legitimate. "A decree from Rome condemned this fiction."

[12] This episode is reported in Daniello Bartoli, *Dell'Historia della Compagnia di Giesù: La Cina, Terra Parte dell'Asia*, Roma, 1663, pp. 1127–1128.

Institutionally speaking, however, Buddhism and Christianity also [32] basically differed from each other on another point, the position of lay believers. In Buddhism, the essence of religious life takes place inside the monastery. It is the life outside the world which, fully regulated as it is by the monastic discipline, does not allow monks much freedom, also from a ritual point of view. However, outside the monastery, among the laity, there is very little constraint. The lay believer is expected to support the *saṅgha*, and he has vowed to abide by a few very general moral rules, most of which, such as the prohibition to kill, are already part of basic morality anyhow. For the rest, he has complete freedom in his family life, in the performance of his social and ritual duties, without any clerical interference. He is not associated with one particular temple and he is not a member of anything like a parish. If monks visit him in his home, they are generally invited to do so in order to perform certain paid religious services (such as funerary rituals). It would be, however, unthinkable for any monk to meddle with a layman's domestic life or to admonish him in a patronizing way: that would be an outrageous violation of his private life. This very loose relation between lay believer and clergy reflects the limited role generally played by religion in China in the personal lives of individuals, and especially among men. Their biographies usually do not even mention their religious beliefs and activities.[13] Chinese scholars [33] practice a religion like they practice respiratory exercises or take up a particular diet, as a kind of hobby with a hygienic purpose. To be a Buddhist was therefore not a matter of total commitment to a creed that permeated life as a whole, but rather belief in the superior skill of a certain type of religious expert. Religion has to be "effective" (*youxiao* 有效), it has to prove that "it works", which also explains the very important role of magic and healing practices.

Again, if we turn to the Jesuit mission, we find a totally different conception. The duties of the layman and his relations to the Church and to the priest pertain to a typically Western conception. According to Chinese standards, the Christian faith must have been extremely demanding. Each layman is associated with the Church, he is bound to a parish, and his family is baptized and registered. He is subjected to the guiding and warning authority of the priest, even in matters concerning his personal life. Clerical control penetrates into the intimacy of his family affairs, and

13 Even in the case of Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠, a fervent Christian and one of the three "pillars of the Church" at the end of the Ming dynasty, the official sources do not make any mention of his religious convictions. Cf. N. Standaert, op. cit., pp. 5–21.

forms an obstacle to the performance of certain ritual obligations. Unlike those of the *saṅgha*, which forms a closed space and is self-centred, the activities of the missionary residences, being outwardly oriented and having certain dirigistic pretensions, could hardly be fitted into the normal pattern of Chinese religious life. The Jesuits had introduced a type of lay religiosity that was absolutely common in Europe, but that in the Chinese context was unknown and very hard to accept.

Finally, the guided expansion had yet another effect: it forced the mis-
[34] sionaries to play several conflicting roles. The accommodation strategy had been thought out and planned from the end of the 16th century, at a time when the mission was only on the verge of establishing itself in China and when very little was known about that country. It was an ingenious strategy, but it was fundamentally contradictory. "Go into China", that strategy said to the missionaries, "go and concentrate on the elite of scholars and administrators. Stimulate their curiosity by means of your maps, watches, telescopes and prisms; earn their admiration with your printed books and by your knowledge of mathematics and astronomy; make yourself respectable by your behaviour as well-educated gentlemen and scholars, and then spread our doctrine in that milieu, using citations, terms and images that they can understand. But at the same time, never forget that you are priests; you will continue to perform all your religious duties. Your place will not only be in the Confucian academy but also in the church, the centre of religious life. Your hands will not only hold the writing brush but also the Crucifix. You shall be at the same time scholars *and* priests."

In Europe, such a blending of roles was entirely normal. With the Jesuits, it was even an eminent quality, typical of their order. But in China these two roles were incompatible. The Confucian scholar could engage in certain fields of science like medicine, pharmacy, geography or even
[35] mechanics. The Jesuit activities in these fields thus did not create any problems. But in traditional China the role of the scholar simply could not be combined with that of the priest, that is to say, with that of the specialist in religious rituals, the professional magician, the intermediary between men and the invisible powers.

In Chinese Buddhism, that problem was virtually unknown. There were great Buddhist clerical scholars, but they always stayed within their own tradition. The learned priest was the *magister scholasticus*, and even when his writings were not only of a scholastic nature and dealt, for example, with geography, bibliography or lexicography, they kept well within the sphere

of Buddhist doctrine. Therefore, the range of roles, the role pattern of the Buddhist clergy, from the most learned *magister* to the common village priest, was homogeneous. Whatever their expertise, they always remained "religious experts", clearly distinct from the class of *literati* by their way of life, their education—and also by their rather low social position.

With the Jesuits, the role pattern was heterogeneous, ambiguous, and this ambiguity undermined the whole missionary enterprise. The incompatible nature of these two roles would soon work against the missionaries themselves, because it allowed their adversaries to accuse them of
[36] duplicity. And so we return to the theme of incompatibility, but in this case not the incompatibility of fundamental ideas, but that of institutions and traditional roles. We have seen that cultures are highly flexible when it comes to absorbing new ideas, and that in the intellectual and religious domain they can allow the co-existence of contradictory conceptions. But when it come to social roles, they do not accept any compromise, as compromise may have immediate consequences for the social order. With us, a magistrate cannot combine his profession with a job as a street entertainer; in China, no scholar could present himself both as a member of the elite and as a technician of religious matters.

We have brought out a whole range of contrasts and oppositions: spontaneous infiltration through contact versus guided introduction from outside; unprepared roaming monks versus well-trained missionaries; monastery versus church and mission house; free Buddhist laity versus bound Christian converts; polycentrism and pluriformity versus imposed uniformity; indigenous sources of income versus external funding; a defined and homogeneous role as religious expert versus a broken, dissonant role pattern as "missionary scholar". These many oppositions yet have one thing in common: they are all related to the character of the
[37] Jesuit mission as a guided process. And that is the great paradox: planning and guidance were factors of weakness and vulnerability of Christianity in China, whereas Buddhism drew its strength from its lack of planning and coordination, from the spontaneous nature of its growth, and from the absence of any central guidance.

I have tried to present an analysis by contrast. It may be asked whether such an approach is well-founded. I believe it to be useful as a heuristic tool, as a method to identify the most characteristic traits of a system and to formulate new questions for, once again, it is in their confrontation that systems reveal their essential character. With cultures as with men, it is from their rapprochement and from their conflict that truth is born.

NUNS AND CONVENTS IN OLD CHINESE BUDDHISM

In its two complementary forms—as a monastic system and as a lay religion—Buddhism spread during the 4th century of our era to almost all regions of China, both to the North, which was occupied by ruling powers of "barbarian" origin, as to the South, which was the territory of a series of Chinese dynasties which had their capital in present-day Nanjing.

This geographical expansion was accompanied by a social and cultural stratification within the Buddhist Church and the education of an elite of learned and cultured monks who played a decisive role in the penetration of Buddhism into the higher strata of the lay world. By around 400 CE,
[44] Buddhism had already won a considerable and growing number of distinguished believers and benefactors amongst the members of prominent families, the aristocracy and the royal court. Buddhism had thus become a respectable religion.

But it is in the 5th century that this development expressed itself at an institutional level: we then begin to see the establishment of large and rich monasteries that house hundreds of monks and that are centres of religious, literary and artistic activity, hubs of culture and Buddhist learning. The most important ones, endowed with large tracts of landed property, were located in the metropolitan regions of the North and the South. They were continually enriched with donations made by the aristocracy and the royal court, with which they entertained close relations. However, the attitude of sovereigns and chief administrators, as representatives of state interests, is always ambiguous: if they allow the religious orders to be favoured, they also aim to control them. The florescence of Buddhism in the 5th century and the establishment of large monastic centres are everywhere accompanied by official measures intended to limit the number of monasteries and ordinations, to select those aspiring to monkhood, and to create bodies tasked with controlling and monitoring the clergy.

[45] Such is the situation at the beginning of the 5th century, during the Liang 梁 dynasty in the South and that of the Tuoba Wei 拓跋魏 in the North, the time when the flourishing of this upper class Buddhism reached its height. This is the period when the first extensive historical, literary and bibliographical compilations appeared, the first collections of the "Biographies of Eminent Monks" (*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, *Mingseng zhuan*

名僧傳), and the first Buddhist encyclopedias. Having reached maturity, the Buddhist Church became aware of its past and of its place in history. But it cannot be emphasized enough that all this activity pertains to only a fraction of the Buddhist clergy: compilers and great scholastic masters were all clerical scholars closely connected with the royal court and members of a group that was rather homogeneous in terms of its interests and its world view.

Another characteristic of these monastics is that they are all men. In their writings, their attention is almost exclusively limited to the male part of the clergy, the *bhikṣu-saṅgha*, the order of monks. The *Gaoseng zhuan*, a large collection of biographies, as all works that followed it and that allow us to retrace the history of Buddhism in China until the 15th century, has only preserved the biographies of monks. In the extensive Buddhist bibliographies that contain thousands of titles, one cannot find
[46] a single reference to a work that was written by a woman. This is rather peculiar, for the pendant of the *bhikṣu-saṅgha*, the *bhikṣuṇī-saṅgha*, the order of nuns, was a well-established institution which according to tradition goes back to the time of the Buddha himself. In China itself, the first nuns had entered the orders in the middle of the 4th century. The female orders were undoubtedly well known to our compilers at the beginning of the 6th century since, at the time, the single region of Nanjing, the very region where they were active, already counted several large convents. Neither can their silence be explained by the number of nuns. Indeed, we do not have any information from this time regarding their number, as the data we possess bear on the total size of the *saṅgha*. The first survey that distinguishes between monks and nuns dates to the beginning of the 8th century, but the numbers it provides are surprising: more than 50,000 nuns out of a total of 123,000 monastics of both genders, which is 40 % of the whole of the Buddhist clergy![1]

Luckily, the silence of these misogynous celibates is broken by a single voice, that of the monk Baochang 寶唱, the compiler of a work unique in its genre: the *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 or "Lives of Nuns", a collec-
[47] tion of biographies of 65 eminent nuns completed in 517.[2] It is an excep-

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[1] 75,524 monks and 50,576 nuns (the results of a survey of the clergy undertaken during the Kaiyuan 開元 period, 713–741 CE; cf. Kenneth Chen, *Buddhism in China, a Historical Survey*, Princeton, 1964, p. 242).

[2] T. 2063. Cf. Kathryn A. Tsai, "The Chinese Monastic Order for Women: The First Two Centuires", in R. W. Guisso and S. Johannesen (eds.), *Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship, Historical Reflections* 8.3, pp. 1–20, New York, 1981 (based on

tional work because, unlike the *Gaoseng zhuan*, it was never imitated afterwards.

Baochang was a scholar-monk at the Liang court at Nanjing. He is known as the author of several extensive biographical and bibliographical works of mediocre quality and his *Biqiuni zhuan* does not rise above this level. It is a rather unsystematic compilation and the biographies it contains often abound in literary clichés. Nevertheless, it is thanks to Baochang that we have the only text that tells us about the history of the female order in China since its beginning in the middle of the 4th century until the time of Boachang himself, a period of more than one and a half centuries. Other texts only contain fragmentary information on the subject, and a few anecdotes can be found in the collections of *mirabilia* as well as in the descriptions of convents, especially in the *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 or "Record of the Monasteries of Luoyang", a work that was composed in the middle of the 6th century.[3] There is also a certain amount of information to be added from epigraphical sources to help us complete the picture we can draw of the nuns' world. But it cannot be denied that, without the *Biqiuni zhuan*, this part of the Buddhist clergy would have remained almost unknown to us.

[48] Depending in this fashion on a single principal source may lead to a distorted view, especially when it concerns a collection that is somewhere between biography and hagiography, that is propagandist in nature and centred on a specific geographical area, that of the lower Yangzi, and more specifically on the region of Nanjing, the metropolis of those times. We therefore have to adapt the content and the nature of our research to the particular character of this source. It has to be emphasized first of all that the information given by the *Biqiuni zhuan* only bears on a very small elite of nuns and does not allow us to form an idea, even a vague one, of the female *saṅgha* as a whole. The latter must have comprised tens of thousands of women whose motivations, levels of education, ways

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her unpublished dissertation: Kathryn A. Cissell, "The Pi-ch'iu-ni Chuan: Biographies of Famous Chinese Nuns from 317–516 CE", University of Wisconsin, 1972).

[3] This "Record of the Monasteries of Luoyang" by Yang Xuanzhi 杨衒之 (ca. 550 CE) contains only little information on the lives of nuns. Nevertheless, the text informs us about two aspects not mentioned in other sources: the sometimes luxurious ambiance of the large convents, and the close relations they have with the imperial seraglio. Amongst the eight convents described in the *Luoyang qielan ji*, four were founded by eunuchs, and the Yaoguang 瑤光 convent, the most prestigious of all, served as a sumptuous refuge for old imperial concubines (as each emperor's advent was accompanied by the emptying of his predecessor's harem). Cf. W. J. F. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang. Yang Hsüan-chih and the Lost Capital (493–534)*, Oxford, 1981, pp. 166–167.

of life, prestige and social relations were undoubtedly very different from those of our "eminent nuns". Moreover, the propagandist and hagiographical nature of our work forbids us to take its information at face value: it only offers us a series of models of the religious ideal in its different roles. These remarks define the orientation of our study, which aims to uncover, more than just facts, that which is the ideal model and norm. It will pertain more to the history of mentalities than to positivist historiography.
[49] Thus, our first question will concern the roles played by exemplary nuns and their relation to those attributed to the "ideal lady" in lay literature, which also obviously deals with an elite ideal.

But we can go further. However idealized they may be, our heroines are represented in a real context. Their biographies often contain precise information on their social background, their education and their ordination. They tell us about their sources of income and their relations with the secular world. They depict, in broad outline, the functioning of an institution that was truly unique in medieval China, as it was a large organization run by women and for women, multiform and hierarchical, and well integrated in the aristocratic society of its times, despite its foreign origin.

As it is to us, the origin of the *bhikṣuṇī-saṅgha* was well known to the Chinese. The first Buddhist texts translated into Chinese in the 2nd century CE already mention the existence of "monks and nuns" and, during the same period, the first Chinese version of the Life of the Buddha had already popularized the tradition concerning the foundation of the female order by the Buddha himself.[4] Although of doubtful historical authentic-
[50] ity, this tradition clearly shows us the hostility of ancient Buddhism with regard to women and to their participation in monastic life. It relates how the Buddha was visited by Mahāprajāpatī, his aunt who had raised him after the death of his mother, heading a group of women of the Śākya clan; how they implored him to be admitted to the *saṅgha* and how the Buddha resolutely refused three times, but finally conceded unwillingly, by the intercession of good Ānanda, while declaring that this admission will have unfortunate consequences for the religion, as women are like the weeds that thrive in paddy-fields and in the end are bound to undermine the integrity of the *saṅgha*. In order to limit the detrimental influence

[4] T. 196, *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經, translated by Zhu Tanguo 竺曇果 (= *Dharmaphala?) and Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳, section 9, pp. 158a–159b.

of women on the order of monks, the Buddha laid down for them "eight heavy obligations" (*gurudharma*) that are meant to place them, individually and collectively, under the complete custody of monks: a nun was not allowed stay for the night at a place where there were no monks; twice a week, she had to receive instruction from the community of monks, whereas she herself was not allowed to instruct or reprimand a *bhikṣu*; she was obliged to pay homage to every monk, even if he had only recently been ordained. In the case of nuns, the three ceremonies of ancient Buddhist monasticism, to wit, ordination, leaving the retreat, and penitence,
[51] had to be repeated by the nuns in front of a delegation of monks.

In the *Vinaya*, the vast corpus of disciplinary rules that was elaborated by the different schools of ancient Buddhism, the life of nuns is subjected to numerous particular restrictions. They begin with the full ordination, which the monks receive from a chapter consisting of at least ten monks, whereas a woman is ordained successively by two chapters consisting of ten nuns and of ten monks. Most of these supplementary rules (their number varies from 60 to 80 according to the different sects) are intended to limit the freedom of movement of nuns and to avoid undesirable contact: it is forbidden for them to travel alone, to be outside the monastery after sunset, to stay with laypeople for the night, to do domestic work for monks, to look through a window, etc. The *Vinaya* naturally contains special rules to avoid any sexual stimulation or provocation, like the prohibition against nuns wearing jewelry or bathing naked. All work of a worldly and productive nature is strictly prohibited, as it is for monks, and the *Vinaya* specifically forbids them to weave.

[52] According to these disciplinary treatises, the life of nuns is exclusively consecrated to spiritual exercises. The food they receive from lay believers while begging has to be consumed before noon: this is the only meal that the *Vinaya* permits them. The afternoon is reserved for exercises in meditation and concentration (*samādhi, dhyāna*); the evening for teaching and discussions in which laypeople may take part. The nun can visit lay believers (mainly women) at their homes at their invitation to have a vegetarian meal there, provided that she is accompanied by a fellow-nun. This permission allows her a certain freedom of movement outside the monastery, but a restricted freedom due to the rule that requires nuns to travel by foot; except in case of illness, the use of any vehicle or any mount is forbidden for them.

Rich in details, the *Vinaya* evokes a monastic life that is well developed: that of significant groups of nuns living together in their monasteries, a

hierarchy based on the date of full ordination, a number of specialized functions, such as mentoring the novices, taking care of foodstuffs, provisioning of drinking water, guarding the storehouses and the sacristy, maintaining the property and so on. Experienced nuns served as teach-
[53] ers (*ācāriṇī*) for the novices, who were attached to them like a personal clientele.

This female organization, collectively subordinated to its male counterpart, appears to have remained hardly productive in the intellectual or literary domains and, in Indian Buddhism, its contribution appears to have been rather modest. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in the 4th century CE, the Indian *bhikṣuṇī-saṅgha* had already become fully developed. The model was there, ready to be transposed to China and to be adopted in a civilization in which it was completely unknown.

Our principal source for China, the *Biqiuni zhuan*, contains rather accurate information on the origin of the female order in that country, first of all in the North, at Luoyang, the capital of a short-lived state of non-Chinese origin, and then in the middle of the 4th century, in the South, in the region of Nanjing, which at the time was the seat of the Chinese dynasty of the eastern Jin. It is even remarkable that we are rather well informed about its first institution when the beginning of the *saṅgha* of monks during the first two centuries of its history remains very obscure to us. But whereas the monastic system of monks was formed in a spontaneous manner, through a slow and progressive diffusion, first winning over
[54] the popular milieux before eventually reaching the elites, the nuns' order developed in the opposite direction: from the beginning it appears to have been an affair of the elite. The four nuns who, in the *Biquini zhuan*, represent the two first generations were respectively the first three, the daughter of a prefect, of a sub-prefect, and of a military commander, and the fourth one, the old wife of an assistant of the crown prince.[5] The first Chinese sister, Jingjian 淨檢, approached a Kashmiri monk who stayed at Luoyang and requested him to ordain her as well as twenty-four other female postulants. As we can see, it is from the elite milieux that the initiative was taken.

But it was too much to ask on the part of Jingjian. The disciplinary rules of nuns, the *bhikṣuṇī-prātimokṣa*, of course had not been translated into Chinese yet and it was not until some forty years later that Jingjian, already old, and four other novices could be ordained by an Indian master.

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[5] *BQNZ* I, p. 934c (Jingjian); I, p. 935a (An Lingshou 安令首); I, p. 935a–b (Zhixian 智賢); I, p. 935b (Miaoxiang 妙相).

This ordination was, properly speaking, invalid, since, as we have seen, the *Vinaya* stipulates that the ordination of nuns has to be conferred by two chapters, one of which comprises at least ten nuns who have received full ordination. But a compromise was found by referring to the venerable precedent of Mahāprajāpatī, the Buddha's aunt, and her companions who
[55] had been ordained by the Buddha without the presence of such a chapter, which obviously would have been impossible to gather. This situation of ritual irregularity would long persist, in the North as well as in the South. The first convents were established in Nanjing in the middle of the 4th century under the patronage of a Buddhist minister at the imperial court, which he dominated.[6] But it was not until the following century, when the region of Nanjing already counted several convents and hundreds of nuns, that this rather unorthodox situation came to an end, due to an exceptional event in the history of Chinese Buddhism. This was the arrival in 429 CE of a small group of Sinhalese nuns who had been brought to Canton by an Indian sea captain. Once they reached the capital, they stayed in a convent ordered to learn Chinese. They were not numerous enough to form the chapter required by the *Vinaya*, but several years later, the captain of the ship, a certain Nandin, returned to Canton with a new cargo of eleven Sinhalese *bhikṣuṇī*s, led by a certain "Tiesaluo" (maybe Tissarā).[7] This was undoubtedly no coincidence, for the great master Guṇavarman, who at that time resided at Nanjing under the protection of the court, was a personal friend of the captain Nandin, and it is probable that it was he who had had them come.[8] Thus, we see nuns who had come—or rather
[56] had been "ordered" to come—from Śrī Lankā to ensure the orthodox continuation of the female *saṅgha* in remote Mahā-Cīna! This is also one of the rare cases of missionary feedback, in which a foreign master residing in China is in contact with his country of origin in South Asia.

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[6] This was the powerful minister He Chong 何充 (292–346) who before his death gave one of his houses to some dozen nuns who had fled from the North, in order to establish a convent (the Jianfu si 建福寺). Soon afterwards, his niece, empress He 何皇后, founded the second convent in southern China, the Yong'an si 永安寺. Cf. *BQNZ* I, p. 935c.

[7] *BQNZ* II, p. 939c, p. 941a; III, p. 942b.

[8] After having stayed some twenty years in the indianized kingdom of Shepo 闍婆 (= Java?), where he was able to convert the royal family, Guṇavarman was invited by imperial order to come to China (425 CE). The *Gaoseng zhuan* (T. 2059, j. III, p. 340c) tells us that he embarked on the ship of an Indian merchant called Nandin—undoubtedly the same one who in 433 CE arrived in Canton with the second group of Sinhalese nuns. Guṇavarman was no longer there to receive them, but it was certainly he who had had them come: according to his biography, shortly before his death (431 CE), "he had asked a lay devotee of the Western Country" to invite them. This *upāsaka* was probably the same Nandin.

The Sinhalese sisters did not come in vain. After a few years, the first group had learnt enough Chinese to pronounce the formulary and, in 434 CE, the ritual to ordain the Chinese nuns anew could be celebrated on a large scale.[9] From the ritual point of view it was an event of great importance for, through this orthodox transmission of the doctrine, the female order in China was directly connected, through an uninterrupted monastic lineage, to Mahāprajāpatī and, through her, to the Buddha himself. In Buddhism, such an unbroken line of transmission is considered as the foremost criterion of authenticity. However, as we will see, this vast undertaking of new ordinations would create a number of disciplinary difficulties at the capital.

But for the moment let us return to our first question, that which concerns our Chinese nuns as idealized figures, and the stereotyped roles that are attributed to them in their biographies. As it is a selection of eminent
[57] nuns, one is not surprised that their social background is relatively high. In fifty-five biographies out of a total of sixty-five, the name and the background of their families is specified, which seems to indicate that these families were rather distinguished. In seven cases, the text mentions the official positions occupied by their fathers or ancestors. However, none of these magistrates were so distinguished as to be mentioned in the secular historical sources, and none of them belong to any of the great aristocratic families of the time. From this we can conclude that our nuns did not hail from the highest spheres of society or from the popular masses, but from an intermediate milieu of well-to-do families. This also explains why, in some cases at least, it is said that material misery (poverty or dispersion of the family in times of war) had been the reason for them to take up the robes.

Entering the religious life was considered as one of the most serious acts, especially in a relatively high milieu in which a rigid code of social norms and obligations prevailed. In no less than ten cases, the family was opposed to the wish of the girl to join the order (but it often concerned very young girls and one of them was only eleven years old). Naturally,
[58] the marriage plans on the part of the parents often accounted for their opposition. Sometimes we learn of a disappointed fiancé. Sengji 僧基 had been engaged to a good family by her mother without her knowledge, and she did not come to know of it until the wedding day itself. She

[9] *BQNZ* II, p. 940a.

immediately abstained from all food with terrifying perseverance; on the seventh day, her condition had become so critical that her fiancé gave up this union: “Each of us”, he said, “has an ambition from which nobody can make us deviate”, and Sengji’s mother gave her permission to become a novice.[10]

In other similar cases, there was undoubtedly a breach of contract between two families. This is why the tension would sometimes rise higher. At the age of fifteen, Tanhui 曇暉 had extracted permission from her mother to enter the order by threatening to commit suicide. But her mother had already promised to marry her off, and her fiancé did not accept this disavowal of a promise, and broke into the convent with a whole group of followers. The attempt failed, however, because Tanhui was courageously defended by her servants—an interesting detail, for it shows that, even in a convent, Tanhui remained a young lady of distinction. The frustrated fiancé filed a complaint with the civil authorities, and the governor of the province, undoubtedly embarrassed by this unprecedented litigation, consulted the Indian master Kālayaśas. In the end the matter was settled thanks to the generosity of this master who himself
[59] offered to pay the fine fixed by mutual agreement.[11] While reading these family dramas, it should not be forgotten that the consent of the parents was indispensable for entering the religious life, not only from a moral point of view, but also because the *Vinaya* prescribes that nobody can be ordained without permission of his or her parents if they are still alive and, in addition, for nuns, without permission of her husband if she is married.[12]

Once fully ordained, a nun is supposed to lead a life of monastic poverty. But apart from those who take up asceticism, our nuns hardly seem to have observed this rule with much rigour. Generally, they live in large and rich monasteries supported by considerable donations. Begging for food, an essential institution in the monastic life of Indian Buddhism, was never popularized in China, and its large convents certainly lived on regu-

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[10] *BQNZ* I, p. 936a.

[11] *BQNZ* IV, p. 946a–b.

[12] Cf. the ordination formularies for nuns: T. 1432 *Tanwude lübu za jiemo* 曇無德律部雜羯磨 (*Karmavācanā* of the Dharmaguptaka school), transl. attributed to Kang Sengkai 康僧鎧, ca. 250 CE, p. 1048c; an almost identical version in T. 1433 *Jiemo* 羯磨 (*Karmavācanā*), transl. by Zhu Tandi 竺曇諦, ca. 250 CE, p. 1060[a], and in T. 1434 *Sifen biqiuni jiemo fa* 四分比丘尼羯磨法 (*Dharmaguptaka*[*vinaya*]-*bhikṣuṇī-karmavācanā*), transl. by Guṇavarman in 431 CE, p. 1067a.

lar income from their landed property. The convent had its kitchen and its refectory. While describing a kitchen scene, our chronicler Baochang provides an interesting detail: the meal is prepared on a stove by two novices and two slaves (*bi* 婢).[13]

Fixed properties such as land, buildings and large statues constituted the collective and inalienable property of the *saṅgha*, its "permanent
[60] assets" (*changzhu* 常住), even if they came from a donation made in favour of a specific nun. But it often happens that the nun who was thus favoured became the abbess of "her" convent. Even though the *Vinaya* prescribes that all monastic functions are to be held on a rotating basis, the position of abbess seems to have become permanent, at least in the case of these nuns.[14] But it is also very often the case that individual donations remained the personal property of nuns. Miaoyin 妙音, who around 400 CE exercised immense influence at the court, had received so many gifts that her wealth astonished the capital; Zhixian 智賢 had received very costly robes of embroidered silk; Baoxian 寶賢 received a monthly allowance of ten thousand copper coins as a sign of imperial privilege.[15]

What did these privileged nuns do with this wealth? It is remarkable that, even in these idealized biographies, charity pure and simple hardly plays a role. In only five cases do we see nuns taking care of the sick, the disabled and victims of famine and, in two of these, it is to their close relatives that they gave their aid.[16] Apart from this, all good works—a very frequent theme in the biographies—take place inside the convent itself, for the benefit of the *saṅgha* itself. It is the nun herself who establishes
[61] herself as a donor, a role in which she sometimes shows great generosity. She enlarges the "permanent assets" of the convent by having halls and pagodas built. And one passage of the *Biqiuni zhuan* shows that such a sister involved in construction maintains a certain authority over the use of the buildings established by her. Huiqiong 慧瓊 built a convent on a piece of land that she had obtained from a princess. A few years later, she had a second one built to live there with her companions and—incredi-

[13] *BQNZ* IV, p. 946b (biography of Tanhui).

[14] For some examples, see *infra*, note 43.

[15] *BQNZ* I, p. 936c (Miaoyin); p. 935b (Zhixian); II, p. 941b (Baoxian).

[16] *BQNZ* I, p. 936c (Lingzong used all her energy to take care of the victims of an epidemic); II, p. 938c (Fasheng 法勝 took care of an ailing widow; in order to buy medicine she went begging in the streets); III, p. 942c (Sengmeng 僧猛 distributed food and clothing to the poor; she protected animals against hunters at the risk of her own life); II, p. 939b (Shanmiao 善妙 provided for her widow sister and her child); III, p. 942c (Sengmang returned to her birth place to take care of her ailing mother).

bly—presents the first one to a monk.[17] It often happens that nuns have bronze or stone statues made, sometimes very costly and of considerable size. This practice is confirmed by the votive inscriptions that figure on the statues and in the rock temples in northern China: many donations were made by nuns. The same applies to the beautiful paper manuscripts that were given to convents (in one case, more than a hundred scrolls)[18] and that were undoubtedly provided with stereotyped colophons that we know so well thanks to the manuscripts found at Dunhuang.

There were also other ways for nuns to spend their fortune for the glory of the Church, namely, through communal activities. Once a year, Dele 德
[62] 樂 spent all her income to organize a large "gathering to explain [texts]" (*jianghui* 講會); "she did not put any limit on the number of nuns and monks (*sic*) who could participate, and everyone was provided for by her (that is to say, at her expense)." It also happens that nuns raise money to cover the costs of a visit by an eminent master: this is the case with Jingxiu 淨秀, who is worried by only having collected a thousand copper coins, and fears that this sum will not suffice to invite master Huiyao 慧曜, a great *Vinaya*-specialist.[19]

It is in this milieu, that of a well-developed monastic organization, that the lives of the eminent nuns described in the *Biqiuni zhuan* took place. Let us now try to distinguish some stereotyped roles amongst them some typological variants of the "ideal nun".

1. The first role, and certainly the most prestigious one, is that of the "lady of the convent", the cultured Mother Superior, the active and sociable organizer. In some regards, this role is related to the lay ideal of the virtuous lady, as found in the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳, a famous collection of anecdotes dating to the beginning of our era about "eminent women", as well as in the biographies of illustrious women that figure in the dynastic histories of the time.[20] Several of the stereotypical virtues that are attributed to them are also those of the ideal nun: a
[63] sense of duty and obedience, humility, indefatigable zeal, heroic self-

[17] *BQNZ* II, p. 938b.
[18] *BQNZ* IV, p. 947b (Sengshu 僧述).
[19] *BQNZ* IV, p. 945b.
[20] Cf. Albert R. O'Hara, "The Confucian Ideal of Womanhood", *Journal of the China Society* 3 (1963), pp. 76–83; Beatrice Spade, "The Education of Women in China during the Southern Dynasties", *Journal of Asian History* 13 (1979), pp. 15–41, and the annotated translation of the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 in Nancy Lee Swann, *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China*, New York, 1932, pp. 82–99.

sacrifice and—especially in the biographies contained in the dynastic histories—a level of education unheard of amongst women.[21]

But there are also considerable differences. In the context of monastic life, the ideal of the "cultured lady" appears to be more diverse: it is enriched with other themes, especially because its virtues can be depicted on a much larger canvas than that of the ideal woman of the lay world, whose activities are almost entirely restricted to family affairs and whose education is subordinate to domestic interests: if the mother of the family has knowledge of literature, it is to teach her children; she remains confined by herself and has very little contact with the outside world. It is completely different with the "lady of the convent". Despite all the *Vinaya*-rules that prescribe a life of seclusion, the biographies evoke an entirely different image: the "lady of the convent" enjoys a freedom in movement and a diversity of social contacts that none of her lay sisters could permit themselves.

Eminent nuns move from one convent to another, sometimes at great distances. The most remarkable example is that of Sengjing 僧敬, whose benefactor, the general-governor of the southern province of
[64] Guangdong, brought her from Nanjing to Canton. It so happened that mid-way Sengjing, still a novice, met the above mentioned group of Sinhalese nuns who were travelling in the opposite direction, from Canton to the capital, and it was from their leader, "Tiesaluo 鐵薩羅", that she received complete ordination. Having arrived in Canton, a large international port, Sengjing wanted to embark on a pilgrimage to the Indies, but monks and lay people held her back with them, such that this travelling nun had to stay in Canton for thirty years. In the end, she was called back to the capital by imperial order and she once again made the long journey across the whole of southern China.[22]

Nuns made frequent visits to the houses of their benefactors. The most eminent ones frequented the court as well, usually for the occasion of a vegetarian meal (*zhai* 齋) that was offered to nuns by a high-ranking devotee and that was accompanied by prayers, preaching and doctrinal discussions. Surprisingly, the biographies do not show any particular interest on the part of the nuns towards their lay sisters and their harem life. In only four cases is there mention of a strictly female clientele. The illustrious people mentioned by the biographies

[21] Cf. Kathryn A. Tsai, op. cit., pp. 12–14.
[22] *BQNZ* III, p. 942b.

as admirers and patrons of our nuns are generally men. This liberty in
[65] social relations distinguishes them entirely from eminent women in the lay world.

One of the most remarkable traits of our nuns is their ability to read and write. Almost 80% of the biographies make mention of their use of texts. It is true that this mostly concerns a special kind of literary knowledge, that which consists in reciting Buddhist texts by heart (*song* 誦). Memorization and recitation of canonical and liturgical texts were part of the routine of religious life. But this practice undoubtedly entailed a certain level of scriptural knowledge. The biographies mention many cases that show exceptional abilities in this domain, and occasionally even a *tour de force*: at a very old age, Zhixian was still able to recite the entire *Lotus Sūtra* once a day; Sengduan 僧端 recited the enormous text of the *Mahāparnivāṇa Sūtra* by heart in five days; Jingcheng 靜稱 had memorized a collection of *sūtra*s whose total number of written characters amounted to 450,000.[23] Other extraordinary displays of mnemonic power are mentioned in the biographies. It seems that generally this mechanical memorization was acquired after entering the order and that it was part of the training of novices. But one should not underestimate its importance because of its routine-like
[66] and mechanical nature, for it often provided a solid basis for more in-depth study: as the text informs us, about a dozen nuns were renowned for their exceptional learning and their ability to interpret not only the most popular Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, but also the voluminous *Vinaya*-corpus, and even a difficult scholastic text, the *Satyasiddhi-śāstra*.[24]

It has to be pointed out, however, that in this domain, nuns are largely surpassed by the members of the male *saṅgha*, both in the quantity as in the diversity of the works produced. The contribution of nuns to the production of Buddhist texts in Chinese has been minimal. As far as we know, no nun, however erudite, was associated with the translation of canonical texts, or left a mark in apologetic literature.

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[23] *BQNZ* I, p. 935b (Zhixian); II, p. 939a (Sengduan); II, p. 940a (Jingcheng).

[24] Amongst *sūtra*s, the favourite text is, as always, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (12 times); other *sūtra*s mentioned are the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (7 times), the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (5 times), the *Śrīmālāsiṃhanāda-sūtra* (3 times), the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajnāpāramitā*, and, once, the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* (which is surprising, as "amidist" devotion based on this *sūtra* is amply attested in these biographies), the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* and the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*. Disciplinary texts (*vinaya*) are mentioned eleven times, of which three times the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* in particular. Scholastics is represented by the *Satyasiddhi-śāstra* (2 times), and once by an unspecified "*abhidharma*".

Despite these restrictions, it has to be recognized that the cultured and eminent nun, the "lady of the convent", is a remarkable figure in medieval China. If, in some regards, she resembles the great lady of the lay world and approaches the ideal of "illustrious women" (*lienü* 列女), she appears, through her own set of characteristics, as a figure that
[67] is entirely new and one might even say atypical if it had not been so entirely accepted by the society at that time.

2. The second role is of an entirely different order: it is that of the clairvoyant, the prophetess, a kind of numinous person, having visions and supernatural powers. Given the partly hagiographical nature of the *Biqiuni zhuan*, it is not surprising that almost half of the biographies make reference to abnormal phenomena and mediumistic experiences. The importance that is accorded to them is significant: it shows that the nun, even more than the monk, was felt to be an extraordinary being to whom miraculous powers were attributed.

In this obscure domain of religious life, any attempt to distinguish between real facts, pious fiction and propaganda is obviously impossible and useless. Amongst the numerous phenomena described by the *Biqiuni zhuan*, some are probably trustworthy and undoubtedly have to do with autosuggestion; others clearly belong to traditional folklore and in some cases Baochang has borrowed almost literally from the fantastical literature of *mirabilia*, known under the name *zhiguai* 誌怪 or "records of extraordinary events".

It should first of all be noted that at least some of the visions that
[68] are described were in no way spontaneous or involuntary, but rather were obtained in a methodical manner through *yoga* practices. These practices belong to a certain type of mental concentration (*dhyāna, samādhi*) by means of which the practitioner attains visions that are sometimes very clear and detailed. The *Biqiuni zhuan* frequently uses the terms "visualization through *dhyāna*" (*changuan* 禪觀), "method of visualization" (*guanfa* 觀法, *guandao* 觀道) or even "esoteric vision" (*biguan* 祕觀), a kind of visualization that was practiced under the guidance of an experienced specialist. This technique was of Indian origin and in some Mahāyāna sūtras it is explained with very precise instructions. Through this method one was able to obtain mental images such as supernatural figures in their traditional setting and with all their attributes, the buddhas of all directions, the future Buddha Maitreya in Tuṣita heaven and, especially, Buddha Amitābha in his western paradise. This visionary *dhyāna* has been practised in China since the early period of Buddhism; the first translation of the *Banzhou*

sanmei jing 般舟三昧經, with its method for the visualization of all buddhas, dates to the 2nd century.[25] The popularity of this technique in China can probably be explained by its similarity, at least superficially,
[69] to certain types of Daoist "yoga" that enabled one to visualize in full detail the innumerable deities and demons that are inside and outside the human body.

Some nuns were specialized in this type of exercise that they practiced individually or in groups. Huixu 慧緒 was associated with a "recluse nun" (*yinni* 隱尼) with whom she engaged herself in the concentration called *Banzhou* for the visualization of all buddhas. Her disciple Huisheng 慧勝 would continue the tradition; she practiced the "method of visualization" under the guidance of two experienced masters and Baochang assures us that "she saw numerous extraordinary signs which were a miraculous confirmation of her powers".[26]

These sessions (*xi* 席, literally: "mat", "seat") were long and exhausting; the practitioner was sometimes immersed in a deep trance that brought about a stillness of the body barely distinguishable from the stiffness of a dead body. Thus, the body of Sengguo 僧果 "was cold, her flesh hard like wood or stone; she breathed only very lightly". Huisu 慧宿 showed her mastery by persevering in this extreme concentration for three days and three nights: the text tells us that "she was hard like wood or stone; when one pushed or pulled her, she remained com-
[70] pletely inert".[27] Visualization through *dhyāna* (*changuan*) was praised as a *tour de force*: it is said that "everyone was full of admiration". In certain types of exercises like the *pratyutpanna-samādhi* (*banzhou sanmei*) or the "concentration on Amitābha", the images evoked are concrete figures. In other cases, the images are more abstract, like the vision of Tanhui who saw two clear lights, one white like the sun and the other blue like the moon. In her trance, she realized that the blue disk represented the inferior Hīnayāna doctrine and, through mental effort, she succeeded in making it disappear. After the session, she was praised by Fayu 法育, a specialist in the "method of visualization"

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[25] [*Sarva-buddha-*]*pratyutpanna-*[*saṃmukhāvasthita-*]*samādhi-sūtra*, T. 417/418, translated by Lokakṣema and Zhu Shuofo 竺朔佛 in 179 CE (this attribution is confirmed by a contemporary colophon in T. 2145 *Chu sanzang ji ji* VII, p. 48a11).

[26] *BQNZ* III, p. 943c (Huixu); IV, p. 946c (Huisheng).

[27] *BQNZ* II, p. 940a (Sengguo); II, p. 940b (Huisu; this episode is recounted in the biography of Faxiang 法相).

(*guanfa*) who had taught this technique to Tanhui when she was still a young novice.[28]

These practices were thus part of the daily lives of nuns. Other visions are more adventitious, but it is likely that they were influenced by practices of autosuggestion or hypnosis through *dhyāna*, since these practices made nuns susceptible to such experiences. Most cases are of a type that is well known, that of the beatific vision that immediately precedes death, and which represents or symbolizes the passage to the "pure land" of Amitābha or to the celestial palace of Maitreya. The
[71] dying nun is supposed to have recounted her vision to her disciples. Here is an example:

On her death bed, Puzhao 普照 loses consciousness. She finds herself in a desert-like landscape, which she traverses in a western direction and she reaches a pagoda in which she finds a monk seated in meditation, eyes closed. He awakes and asks her from whence she came. She tells him, and then in turn asks him how far her convent is. "Fifty million *li*", he tells her, and she finds herself on a highway covered with grass; there a large number of unknown people who are moving in a westerly direction, where she perceives a great light. Puzhao wants to follow them, but the monk does not allow her. She awakes, recounts this whole vision to her disciples, and then she dies.[29]

Other evidence for the possession of extraordinary powers is furnished by the manifestation of supernatural beings. Jingxiu is constantly surrounded by visible and invisible powers that encourage and protect her: she hears voices during her meditation sessions, spirits and dragon kings (*nāgarāja*) manifest themselves to her every day and "are perceived by many people".[30] Many nuns engage themselves in spiritist sessions of a special kind, described by Sylvain Lévi and Edouard
[72] Chavannes in a study that is still a classic.[31] Its ritual is based on an Indian tradition according to which the disciple Piṇḍola, due to a serious transgression, had been condemned by the Buddha to continue his corporal existence in this world until the arrival of the future Buddha Maitreya. Since then, poor Piṇḍola has been wandering in this world like an Indian Ahasuerus. Normally he is invisible, but he shows his presence through sounds or through the mysterious disappearance

28 *BQNZ* IV, p. 946a.
29 *BQNZ* II, p. 938c.
30 *BQNZ* IV, p. 945b.
31 "Les seize arhat protecteurs de la Loi", in *Journal Asiatique* 1916, II, pp. 205–275.

of food and drinks that are offered to him in front of the empty seat that is reserved for him. We know that the "invitation of the saintly monk" became popular in China from the 4th century onwards and the biographies of the *Biqiuni zhuan* contain several references to this ceremony.

Jingxiu—the same nun who was always surrounded by voices and apparitions—devoted herself to it with particular zeal. During a spiritist session, she invited the saintly monk to wash himself and the sound of the bucket that he used was, in silence, perfectly audible. On another occasion, Piṇḍola showed his presence by a snap of the fingers. But occasionally, Jingxiu extended her hospitality to other figures. Thus one day she invited "the five hundred *arhat*s of Lake Anavatapta" and, at another time, "the five hundred *arhat*s of Kashmir". She even
[73] received a visit of visible apparitions: Indian monks in red robes manifested themselves during a "weekly cultic and penitential session".[32]

In this case again, the influence of religious Daoism (especially that of Shangqing 上清 or Maoshan 茅山, with their spiritist revelations) is indisputable. There are other elements of Daoist inspiration that have contributed to the formation of this role of the thaumaturgist nun. Thus there is mention of the power of transmutation (*hua* 化) of material objects (miraculous transformation of ordinary water into perfumed water, incense that spontaneously ignites, magical multiplication of food) and the frequent association of saintly nuns with wild animals. Zhixian is always accompanied by singing birds; talking birds encourage Jingxiu to persevere in her efforts, while Minggan 明感, having escaped from prison and being in an unknown and wild region, is guided by a tiger for ten days. In a similar way, Lingzong 令宗 is shown the way by a deer. The story told of Jingcheng always being kept company by large felines is too good to be true: she always has a tiger with her, and he lies at her side while she meditates. If nuns commit transgressions and do not confess them at the required time, he becomes angry and threatens them, but calms down once they have confessed and done penance.[33]

[74] We may conclude that the image of the thaumaturgist nun, the trance-specialist, was deeply influenced by indigenous conceptions,

[32] *BQNZ* IV, p. 945c.

[33] *BQNZ* I, p. 935b (Zhixian); IV, p. 945b (Jingxiu); I, p. 935b (Minggan); I, p. 936b (Lingzong); II, p. 940a (Jingcheng).

particularly Daoist ones.[34] Especially striking is the concrete nature of the experiences and beliefs: very clear and detailed visions, visible and audible manifestations, material transformations, association with wild nature. All this is very Chinese.

3. The third role that can be distinguished is that of the ascetic, the *yoginī* who devotes herself to abstinence, penitence and mortification and who, sometimes, as we will see, persists in this path until the final consequence—the destruction of her body.

Ancient Buddhism was a doctrine of moderate asceticism. Extreme mortification was rejected because it did not lead to the ultimate goal of complete detachment. A very old formula characterizes the Buddhist doctrine as "the middle way" (*madhyamā pratipad*) between the two extremes of mortification and hedonism. Nevertheless, monastic life involved the observation of some ascetic rules: sexual abstinence, poverty and absence of all material comfort. There were also more rig-
[75] orous practices, such as staying at a cemetery or sleeping while standing. These were hardships to which the monk could subject himself as he wished.

Mahāyāna Buddhism was to add a new dimension to these practices. The practitioner, whether monk or layman, made the solemn decision to realize complete Awakening, that is, to become a buddha in a future existence. From this moment, he was a bodhisattva, that is, a "being destined for Awakening". The bodhisattva ideal entailed a spiritual career extending over an almost endless series of existences during which the aspirant of Awakening would have to practice the principal virtues in their most extreme form (*pāramitā*)—including self-sacrifice. In the Mahāyāna, abstinence and altruism thus became powerful means for the accumulation of merit, that is, of good *karma*, for the sake of oneself or someone else, the idea that merit could be "transferred" being another distinctive feature of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Thus, the theme of mortification and self-sacrifice became more important in this reoriented Buddhism, in China as elsewhere.

This does not explain, however, the special attention given to ascetic practices in the nuns' biographies. More than half of the nuns are, more

[34] But this does not mean that this constituted an emancipatory factor. The thesis (in fashion and well exploited) according to which Daoism is characterized by a "positive attitude" towards women is nothing but a myth invented by Western orientalism. Cf. the pertinent remarks made by J. Holmgren, in "Myth, Fantasy or Scholarship: Images of the Status of Women in Traditional China", *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 6, (1981), pp. 147–170.

or less rigorously, engaged in such practices, whether they are dietary
[76] restrictions, austerities (*kuxing* 苦行), acts of penitence, long vigils or bodily sacrifice, either partial or complete.

What is striking is the frequency with which the theme of vegetarianism appears: whereas it is extremely marginal in the biographies of monks, the *Biqiuni zhuan* explicitly mentions it in more than 30 percent of the cases. This preoccupation with diet is difficult to explain. Maybe it is once again a Buddhist variant of some Daoist beliefs and practices. The terms that the Buddhist sources use are ambiguous, because they literally mean "to eat vegetables" (*sushi* 素食*, caishi* 菜食). In a Daoist context, these terms would have to be taken literally, for "abstinence from the five kinds of grains" (*bi wugu* 辟五穀) forms an essential part of the diet of Daoists (as the "three corpses", that is, the three demonic powers that hide in the human body and that bring about death, live on grains, thus they should not be strengthened). In a Buddhist context, these terms simply mean "to abstain from meat and fish", but some passages clearly show that some nuns were not content with this form of abstinence and followed a diet of the Daoist
[77] type. Thus, Jingcheng and one of her fellow-nuns did not eat grains and exclusively lived on hemp seeds and berries (*shu* 術). Guangjing 光靜 also abstained from grains and contented herself strictly with what the pine trees offered. This is a typically Daoist recipe: the pine being the symbol of longevity, its bark, resin and nuts were eaten. After fifteen years of this diet, Guangjing was in a deep state of exhaustion when fortunately she met a monk who was not Daoist-oriented and who said to her: "With us Buddhists, such a diet is not considered as something meritorious" From this moment, she began to eat grains again and regained her health.[35]

It is also possible that the fanatical asceticism that is mentioned in several biographies had been inspired by a lay ideal of Confucian origin, that of mourning one's father and mother, sometimes even to the point of self-destruction. The biography of Baoxian indeed suggests such a connection. In her youth, before entering the order, she had observed extremely rigorous ascetic practice during the three years of mourning of her mother; now, after her ordination, she excelled in monastic discipline. After the death of her teacher—the substitute of her mother—Puzhao again engaged herself in mortification and continued to impose on herself a severe ascetic lifestyle for the rest

[35] *BQNZ* II, p. 940a (Jingcheng); II, p. 939b (Guangjing).

of her life. Eventually, her health was thereby completely ruined, but
[78] she persevered in imposing penances onto herself day and night while seated on her cushion. Mortifications are sometimes combined with prolonged vigils: famous for her asceticism, Jingyuan 淨淵 observed weekly periods of complete fasting, living on only a bit of water, and not sleeping at all during these periods.[36]

The texts do not explicitly say that these practices were accompanied by a formal vow (*yuan* 願). But it was surely the case for the most extreme example of mortification and altruism, sacrificing oneself. In Chinese Buddhism, this sacrifice took the form of ritualized suicide, most often acted out through self-cremation. As Jacques Gernet has shown,[37] this ritual was not only inspired by Great Vehicle texts, and especially by a passage in the *Lotus Sūtra*, but also by certain Daoist beliefs, particularly regarding notions of "transformation" (*hua*) and purification through fire. The biographies of monks who thus sacrificed themselves provide many details on the entire ritual cycle: the preliminary vow, the meticulous preparations, wrapping the body in bandages soaked in oil, lighting the living torch, the demeanor of the monk who, during his cremation, continues to recite as long as he can, the reactions of the sometimes numerous onlookers, and the gathering
[79] of relics.

Some biographies of the *Biqiuni zhuan* show that nuns also sacrificed themselves through this macabre ritual of self-cremation. But the case of Guangjing forms an exception: having decided on the first day of the year to abstain from all food, she entered *dhyāna* by focusing on Tuṣita heaven; four months later, she died.[38] There is also a case of voluntary mutilation by means of fire, a practice that has survived in China until modern times: one of the nuns burned six fingers down to her palm.[39]

Much more dramatic are the scenes of self-cremation, of which Baochang gives six examples. Sometimes this form of sacrifice is done more or less privately: having withdrawn to a hut, Tanjian 曇簡 and Jinggui 淨珪 gather wood, build a fire, and burn themselves. Farmers

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36 *BQNZ* II, p. 941a (Baoxian); II, p. 938c (Puzhao); IV, p. 946c (Jingyuan).

37 "Les suicides par le feu chez les bouddhistes chinois du V^{e} au X^{e} siècle", in *Mélanges publiés par l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises*, vol. II (1960), pp. 527–558.

38 *BQNZ* II, p. 939b.

39 *BQNZ* IV, p. 946b: "Sister Feng" (Feng *ni* 馮尼); the zealot was a nun of Chinese origin residing at a convent in Gaochang (Turfan). For the cremation of fingers, cf. Gernet, op. cit., p. 543.

working in the fields are alerted by the fire; they rush to the site, but it is too late. However, the example set by the two nuns is contagious. Seven years later, the elder sister of Tanjian, who had witnessed her suicide, built a fire at the same place and burned herself, but this time in front of a large group of bystanders: "all those who had seen it or who had heard of it conceived the desire to attain Awakening".[40]

Self-cremation was always accompanied by recitation on the part
[80] of the victim until the end of her strength. In 463 CE, Daozong 道綜 wrapped herself in bandages soaked in oil and lit herself on fire. The flames had already reached her forehead and her eyes and ears were consumed, but she continued to recite (undoubtedly the passage on the "fire sacrifice" in the *Lotus Sūtra*). The onlookers were full of astonishment and admiration. Some, however, raised objections, even in the convent, for these suicides provoked both attraction and repulsion and there might be efforts to prohibit them. Shanmiao 善妙 prepared her supplication with morbid meticulousness: she herself weaves the bandages in which she plans to wrap herself, and she buys oil with which she fills a large tub in the courtyard of the convent. But she fears that she will be prevented from fulfilling her vow and she tells the nun that stays with her. On the fourth day of the eighth moon, a holy day, she sets her bandages on fire and only at the moment she is engulfed by the flames does she ask her fellow-nun to raise the alarm in order to be able to bid farewell to her companions.[41]

The ambiguous attitude of the authorities and even of lay devotees is well illustrated by the account of the suicide of Huiyao 慧耀. The governor had initially given his permission and the female benefactor of Huiyao had allowed her to burn herself in a pagoda that she had built. Followed by a procession of her disciples, carrying her bandages
[81] and her oil, Huiyao proceeded to the pagoda. But the publicity that was thus brought about led the governor and the benefactor to withdraw. Disappointed, Huiyao returned to the convent. She abstained from all grains and began to take in inflammable sesame oil. In 477 CE, she discretely burned herself in the convent and, during her cremation, she also continued reciting until her face was covered by the flames.[42]

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[40] *BQNZ* III, p. 943c (Tanjian and Jinggui); III, p. 944 (Tanyong 曇勇, elder sister of Tanjian).

[41] *BQNZ* II, p. 940c (Daozong); II, p. 939c (Shanmiao).

[42] *BQNZ* II, p. 941c.

In the six examples of self-cremation given by Baochang, sacrifice is driven to its extreme. The practice continued in China, but these are undoubtedly extreme cases which have always provoked opposite reactions. The role of the ascetic nun is much better illustrated by those who imposed onto themselves, as we have seen, a strict discipline, penances, vegetarianism, and fasts that were sometimes followed at the risk of their own lives.

To conclude, we would like to say a few words about institutional aspects, the internal organization of the convent, its relations to the lay authorities, and the ecclesiastical functions instituted by the state in order to control the clergy.

For the period of our text, we are not well informed on the details of monastic organization and we only have partial information, due to chance. The general management of the convent was in the hands of the
[82] abbess (*sizhu* 寺主), who was assisted by a female director (*weina* 維那)
and a rectrix (*gangji* 綱紀), both charged with the daily administration of the convent, especially with the supervision of the nuns and the novices, and maintaining discipline. In addition, there was a nun who bore the title *chanfan* 禪範 (literally: "meditation programme") and who was responsible for organizing the sessions of collective meditation (*chanhui* 禪會) that constituted an essential part of monastic life.

In principle, all appointments were made by following a complex voting system, a kind of election within an autonomous community. But we have already observed while discussing the function of the abbess that the system was not free from external influences: when a rich donor establishes a convent in support of an eminent nun, this nun is normally "elected" as the abbess of the convent. What we have here is a form of dependence, a bond between client and patron that is typical of medieval society in China. It goes without saying that this dependence is found in greater degree in the case of establishments founded by the emperor and his entourage.

There are many clear examples. Zhisheng 智勝 was appointed as the abbess of the Jianfu 建福 convent "by imperial order". After the great minister Sima Daozi 司馬道子built a convent for Miaoyin, a nun whom he
[83] sought to favour, he appointed her as abbess. It was the emperor who
ordered Sengjing to return from remote Canton to the capital. After the prince of Shaoling 邵陵 repeatedly but to no avail requested his favourite

Lingyu 令玉 to accept the function of abbess, the emperor ordered her to do so: "Thus", our text says, "she could no longer refuse".[43]

The emperor and the court took the liberty of intervening in the organization of large monasteries. When Miaoyin was made abbess, "more than a hundred nuns were allocated to her" in quasi-feudal manner. Because the Futian convent was too far from the palace, the emperor had another one built nearby and all the nuns of the former were summarily transferred there. The emperor decided that the *vihāra* of Jingxiu should take the official name "convent of Chanlin 禪林". He forbade, moreover, a princess to donate her residence to the nuns' order so as to change it into a convent, "because, at those times, the regulations did not allow the irregular establishment of monasteries". It is not until later that imperial authorization was given and the work could be started.[44]

This combination of patronage and restrictive control on the part of the state is characteristic of Chinese Buddhism. The authorities took measures
[84] sures to prevent unchecked growth of the *saṅgha*, for example through elimination procedures (*shatai* 沙汰, literally: "putting through a sieve") in the form of official exams imposed onto monks and nuns. The *Biqiuni zhuan* contains the only description we have of such an examination. The governor Du Ba 杜霸, who incidentally happened to be a fervent Daoist, announced that the entire clergy of the province "will be put through a sieve". The rules were strict and the questions very difficult (they probably concerned the recitation of a certain number of texts). Young nuns—those who risked being disrobed first—were panic-stricken and fled. Sure of her knowledge, only Zhixian remained in place. At the day of inspection, Zhixian and those old nuns who had stayed were assembled in a military building outside the city. After the exam—which is another story—the governor held back Zhixian and made indecent proposals to her.[45]

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[43] *BQNZ* III, p. 943a (Zhisheng); I, p. 936c (Miaoyin); III, p. 942b (Sengjing); IV, p. 947a (Lingyu).

[44] *BQNZ* I, p. 936c (Miaoyin); III, p. 944a (story of the Futian 福田 convent, biography of Huixu); IV, p. 945b (Jingxiu); IV, p. 947b (prohibition and then permission to establish the convent; biography of Sengshu).

[45] *BQNZ* I, p. 935b. Several passages reflect the antagonism and competition between Buddhism and the Daoist religion at the time. The nun Daoxing 道馨 was poisoned by a Daoist adept who taught the art of "holding one's breath" (*fuqi* 服氣) and who felt threatened by the influence of her rival to whom she had lost a large part of her clientele (I, p. 936b); on the other hand, Daorong 道容 succeeded in removing the Daoist master Wang Puyang 王濮陽 (an adept in the method of "pure water", *qing shui* 清水, and a protégé of the emperor) by showing his magical powers (I, p. 936b).

We have seen how the governor of the province had prohibited Huiyao from burning herself alive ("If sister Huiyao", he had said threateningly, "actually proceeds with her self-cremation, the Yongkang convent will be convicted in its entirety for complicity") and how lay authorities inter-
[85] vened in personal vocations when they created legal difficulties, as in the case of the disappointed fiancé of Tanhui.

The desire to control the *saṅgha* expressed itself at the level of the central government through the creation of an official organ charged with the supervision of the clergy and led by ecclesiastical officials. This system is rather well known for the North, where it took shape from the end of the 4th century onwards, under the Tuoba Wei. At the capital it had a bureau directed by a "clergy coordinator" (*shamen tong* 沙門統) and a "general director" (*du weina* 都維那), as well as "*Saṅgha* Offices" (*sengcao* 僧曹) that were backed by clerical inspectors in each prefecture.

For the South our information is more fragmentary, but it is sufficient for us to conclude that a similar organization, though more rudimentary, was developed there, but with a remarkable innovation entirely unknown elsewhere: eminent nuns fulfilled administrative functions there. In 470, Jingxian, a *Vinaya*-specialist, was charged with "the general supervision of the convents" (*zong si* 總寺).[46] A few years earlier, another abbess had been appointed as "general director" (*du weina*) and it is said that she held this position with justice and integrity, but also with firm authority. This position seems to have required her to solve concrete problems, for we are
[86] told that she was consulted by more than 700 people regarding questions of discipline.[47]

Likewise, in 466 CE, the abbess Baoxian was appointed as "rectrix of the metropolitan *saṅgha*" (*duyi sengzheng* 都邑僧正); she was also praised for her composure and firmness. Her biography cites a unique document: an official order coming from the bureau over which she presided.

Despite the introduction of the orthodox ordination ceremony by the Sinhalese nuns, the previous ordination procedure by a single master seems to have perpetuated and led, within a few decades, to an unchecked proliferation of irregular ordinations. When the master Faying 法穎 announced that several very young novices were going to be ordained, the rectrix decided to intervene and sent this edict from her bureau: "It is not permissible to receive ordination in an irregular manner. In case these novices are not yet of the [prescribed] age, the teacher has to gather

[46] *BQNZ* IV, p. 946c.
[47] *BQNZ* II, p. 941b.

them and hear them confess. Afterwards, they have to go to the *saṅgha* bureau in order to obtain permission [to be ordained]. The Bureau will invite people to examine them and it is only after [this examination] that they can receive ordination. Whoever breaks [from this rule] will be excommunicated."[48]

[87] All this is astonishing indeed: an abbess who, in a post conferred to her by lay authorities, ensures the application of the religious policy of the government—for it clearly concerns the prohibition of irregular ordinations—and a woman who, in this function, can reprimand an eminent master and summon him to cease his illegal activities!

It can be concluded that the large convent allowed the most eminent nuns to use their organizational talents at three levels: within the large convent, a complex community that has hundreds of members and several specialized departments, they could perform managerial and supervisory functions; having, as abbesses of a convent, the most important persons of the lay world as their patrons, they exercised their authority in an intermediary position which allowed them to entertain relations with the court; finally, in some exceptional cases, the institution of "*saṅgha* bureaus" gave them access to certain relatively modest, but not negligible, posts in the state apparatus. The paradox is that a system that was intended to control and thus check the development of the *saṅgha* contributed to the consolidation of the female order from an institutional point of view.

[88] The introduction of the *bhikṣuṇī-saṅgha* in China was undoubtedly an important innovation. It led to the formation of a female elite and an institution of an entirely novel kind: it was an organization in which women who had talent had the opportunity to acquire renown and authority outside their family, and to get access to the larger world despite their rather modest backgrounds. We should be grateful to old Baochang for having compiled the *Biqiuni zhuan*, for without him this world of practising, scholarly, ambitious, thaumatugic, heroically ascetic, and bureaucrat nuns would have disappeared forever, swallowed up by time.

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[48] *BQNZ* II, p. 941b. An interesting case of cooperation between the ecclesiastical authorities and worldly power is reported in the biography of Zhisheng (III, p. 942c): despite her status as nun, she was constantly harassed by a man who wanted to marry her. Since he kept insisting, "she informed the order about it", and it (that is, probably, the bureau of the rectrix) filed a written complaint with the governmental authorities.

© Shinohara, Koichi and Schopen, Gregory, eds., *From Benares to Beijing* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic, 1991): 277–304.

A NEW LOOK AT THE EARLIEST CHINESE BUDDHIST TEXTS

1. *Introductory Remarks*

The Chinese Buddhist texts that on the basis of internal and external evidence may be ascribed to the "embryonic phase" of Chinese Buddhism—the second and early third century CE—constitute a corpus of writing materials roughly equal to one-third of the *Hou Han shu*. If we compare this large body of archaic Chinese Buddhist scriptures with the few bits of available information on the historical aspects of Han Buddhism, or with the pitiful amount of original source materials on Han Daoism (or, indeed, on any other aspect of religious life of that period), it is obvious that, at least as far as the scriptural evidence is concerned, we might be tempted to conclude that Buddhism is by far the most richly documented sector of Later Han spiritual life. At first sight it would seem possible to analyse the doctrinal *contents* of these texts in order to fill in the empty contours of Han Buddhism: what the first generations of Chinese devotees believed is to be found in the scriptures.

This, of course, is a methodological error. In spite of all the changes and adaptations which the scriptures may have undergone in the course of translation, they basically remained intrusions from another civilization, containing an enormous range of concepts, rules, literary images and religious lore which, once introduced into China, lost their original degree of cohesion and integration. Some elements in a scripture could—for a variety of reasons—"catch on" and become productive factors in Chinese Buddhism, whereas other notions figuring in the same text would remain alien and undigested.[1] The argument that the fact that a certain scripture was selected for translation implies a conscious choice of the translator and therefore to some extent reflects the predilections of the Chinese public does not hold good either, for that choice may have depended on other factors as well: the foreign masters produced the texts that they happened

[1] To give only one example: the ideal of supporting oneself by food-begging never became popular in China, in spite of the fact that it is very often referred to in the scriptures as an essential part of the monastic life.

to have memorized before their arrival in China, or that were available as manuscripts. In general, as far as actual impact and productivity are concerned, we have to use other criteria, such as the occurrence of certain notions in the earliest commentaries, prefaces and colophons and in certain passages that, as far as we can judge, did not figure in the original
[278] text and were added for the benefit of a Chinese audience. Some of the ideas we find there also play a central role in the scriptural texts, such as the concepts of impermanence and causation, the elimination of desire, the elusive and dangerous nature of uncontrolled thought and the need to control it by means of psychic exercises. Such ideas may indeed be recognized as central concepts in Han Buddhism. But the mere fact that a certain theme figures in a translated Han scripture may certainly not be taken to mean that it was part of the Chinese religious experience.

There is, however, another possible approach that may yield some new, if indirect, clues: an analysis of the formal aspects of these texts, and an attempt to define their linguistic, terminological and stylistic features. Since I have presented a survey of the linguistic peculiarities of the earliest Buddhist translations elsewhere,[2] I shall in this article confine myself to a very brief summary of the purely linguistic features, and concentrate on matters of terminology and style. In doing so, I shall not go into the complicated textual relations between earlier and later Chinese versions, nor shall I make any detailed comparisons between these ancient translations and their extant Pāli and Sanskrit parallels. The question will be to what extent, and in what ways, these archaic translations can be made to yield information about the intellectual and social context of the very first stage of Chinese Buddhism, when it still was an obscure subcultural religion in extramural Luoyang.

In order to do so, we must first clearly define the corpus of texts that can be accepted as genuine. This is a sad necessity, for Chinese Buddhist bibliographers through the ages have been ever more generous in their attributions—in the successive bibliographies the number of works attributed to An Shigao 安世高 has grown from 34 to 179, and those "by Lokakṣema" from 7 to 23!

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[2] "Late Han Vernacular Elements in the Earliest Buddhist Translation", *Journal of the Chinese Language Teacher's Association* 12.2 (October, 1977), pp. 177–203.

The criteria for selection are the following:

(1) In general, no attention has been paid to attributions made later than the fourth century CE. This means that in most cases I have relied on what is considered the best authority regarding archaic translations: the *Zongli zhongjing mulu* 總理眾經目錄, completed by the scholar-monk and eminent bibliographer Dao'an 道安 in 374 CE.[3] To some extent I have also been guided by information drawn from the early fourth century bibliographer Zhi Mindu 支敏度.

(2) Wherever possible, corroborating evidence has been drawn from textual glosses, from contemporary or very early colophons and prefaces, and from the fact that certain scriptures are quoted or referred to in the earliest Chinese Buddhist commentaries,[4] or have been the basis of secondary, "polished" recensions that were produced shortly after the end of the Han.

(3) On the basis of (1) and (2), some "landmarks"—unquestionably authentic products of certain translators—could be established, e.g. T 224 *Daoxing jing* 道行經 attributed by Dao'an to Lokakṣema: mentioned as Lokakṣema's work in Dao'an's preface to the same scripture; confirmed by a contemporary colophon dated October 26, 179 CE supplying details about place and circumstances of translation, names of collaborators, etc.), or T 602 *Anban shouyi jing* 安般守意經 (attributed by Dao'an to An Shigao; often quoted in the earliest [first half 3rd century] Chinese commentaries; preface by Kang Senghui
[279] 康僧會 ca. 250 CE mentioning An Shigao as the translator, and supplying names of Chinese devotees from the school of An Shigao who transmitted the scripture).

(4) These "landmarks" were subjected to terminological and stylistic analysis in order to define a number of distinctive lexical and stylistic features peculiar to certain translators' teams.

[3] Cf. my *Buddhist Conquest of China*, Leiden, 1959, pp. 30–31.

[4] The first commentaries that quote or refer to Chinese Buddhist scriptures are T 1694 *Yin chi ru jing zhu* 陰持入經注 (glosses on An Shigao's *Yin chi ru jing*, T 603, by a certain Chen Hui), and the anonymous glosses in the first chapter of T 225, *Da mingdu jing* 大明度經, wrongly attributed to Zhi Qian (cf. Lewis R. Lancaster, "The Chinese Translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* attributed to Chih Ch'ien", *Monumenta Serica* 28 (1969), pp. 246–257).

(5) The other extant scriptures attributed by Dao'an and Zhi Mindu to Han translators were re-examined in the light of (4); as a result, two of these had to be eliminated.

This critical selection has yielded a body of 29 texts that may be considered genuine Han translations, made at Luoyang by five different translators' teams between 150 and 220 AC. Their titles are listed in the Appendix to this article; for reasons of space the detailed bibliographical data concerning each text have been omitted.

2. *The 'Scriptural Idiom'*

Anybody who even casually has looked into an early Chinese Buddhist text must have been struck by the very peculiar kind of language used in it—a literary medium that differs as much from standard classical Chinese as it does, rather surprisingly, from the fairly regular classical language of the earliest Daoist documents.[5] In some scriptures this particular idiom prevails throughout; in other cases we find various degrees of *wenyan* 文言 admixtures: classical stylistic features such as a regular four-syllable prosodic pattern, the use of Chinese-type parallelism, and archaisms such as *si* 斯 for "this" and *jue* 厥 as a third person possessive pronoun. It is obvious that we have to do with a "scriptural idiom" serving as the vehicle of a marginal literature written for a special type of readership.

It cannot be doubted that this idiom largely reflects the vernacular language of the period, the more so since many features that are characteristic of our texts agree with the findings of scholars in the field of Chinese historical linguistics.[6] However, it should be pointed out that the source

[5] The "Inscription of Laozi" (*Laozi ming* 老子銘) of 165/166 CE by Bian Shao 邊韶 (incorporated in the *Lishi* 隸釋 by Hong Kuo 洪適, ed., *Sibu congkan* p. 3.1a) is obviously a product of court literature, written in the over-ornate rhetoric style that was commonly used for such commemorative inscriptions. The *Liexian zhuan* 烈山傳, certainly not by Liu Xiang, but probably a Han work (as it is quoted twice by Ying Shao 應邵 in his *Hanshu* commentary, second half second century CE), is written in regular *wenyan* without any trace of "vulgar" language. But even the three texts that at least by some scholars are associated with late Han popular Daoism: the *Taiping jing* 太平經 and the *Xiang'er* 想爾 and *Heshang Gong* 河上公 commentaries on *Laozi*, are all written in a simple and artless but rather regular *wenyan*, and do not show any feature characteristic of the language of archaic Buddhist scriptures.

[6] Cf. W. A. C. H. Dobson, *Late Han Chinese*, Toronto, 1964; Ushijima Tokuji 牛島徳次, *Kango bumpō ron: chūko-hen* 漢語文法論: 中古編; Yoshikawa Kōjirō, "*Sesetsu-shingo* no bunsho 世說新語の文章", *Tōhōgaku* (Kyoto 10.2, 1939, pp. 86–110 (English translation by Glen

materials used by such scholars (such as Zhao Qi's 趙岐 second-century Mencius commentary; selected passages from early dynastic histories, and *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語) fully belong to the sphere of the cultured elite and therefore are written in a standard *wenyan* that only occasionally contains some vernacular elements, especially in direct speech. The Buddhist materials exhibit those features to a much greater extent, and in this respect by far surpass any secular text. The elements of living speech, which in secular literature are no more than vernacular intrusions embedded in a mass of classical idiom, here play a dominating role.

[280] Yet it would be a gross simplification to regard this early Buddhist scriptural idiom as a completely faithful reflection of Late Han vernacular. We have to consider the influence of various distorting factors.

In the first place, with one or possibly two exceptions[7] we are dealing with translations, and sometimes we find distortions, especially at the syntactic level, that must be due to the non-Chinese (Indian) original. One interesting case is the frequent use of the vocative. In native Chinese literary prose, where it is rather uncommon, it invariably is placed in isolation at the beginning of the sentence. In Buddhist texts it is often inserted awkwardly somewhere in the first part of the sentence, thereby giving rise to such monstrosities as *Rushi, Shelifu, zhufo* 如是, 舍利弗, 諸佛 ... "And so, Śāriputra, all Buddhas ...". Another curious case may be the use of the particle *yi* 亦 meaning "and" in enumerations, possibly under the influence of Indian *ca* or *athavā*. In general, however, this type of distorting influence is only rarely found. The archaic translations are very free and seldom aim at word-for-word rendering, as clearly can be observed in the translation of stereotyped formulas of which the Indian original can be defined with certainty.

In the second place, we often find distortions due to prosodic patterns, especially in the somewhat more "sophisticated" scriptures. It is well-known that Chinese literary prose of the second and third century shows

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Baxter, "The *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* and Six Dynasties Prose Style", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 18, 1955, pp. 124–242); id., "Rikuchō joji shōki 六朝助字小記", in Yoshikawa's Collected Works, *Yoshikawa Kōjirō zenshū* 吉川幸次郎全集, vol. 7, Tokyo 1968, pp. 473–598; id., *Bussetsu Muryōjugyō no bunshō* 佛說無量壽經の文章; Hong Cheng 洪誠, "Lun Nanbei-chao yiqian Hanyu de xici 論南北朝以前漢語的繫詞", *Yuyan yanjiu* 2, 1957, pp. 1–22; Liu Shiru 劉世儒, "Lüe lun Wei Jin Nanbei-chao zidongci 'shi'-zi de yongfa 略論魏晉南北朝繫動詞"見"字的用法", *Zhongguo yuyan* 66.12 (1957), pp. 19–24.

7 T 1508 *Ahan koujie shi'er yinyuan jing* (阿含口解十二因緣經), which, as indicated by the title, appears to be an "oral explanation" of the Chain of Causation and some other related scholastic subjects, and T 602 *Da anban shouyi jing*, which partly consists of an early commentary on a text translated by An Shigao.

a marked preference for the four-syllable line. To take one example from contemporary secular literature: the *Shenjian* 申鑑 by Xun Yue 荀悅 (ca. 200 CE) shows a distribution in which 52% is made up of four-syllable clauses, against 17.3% three-syllable, and 15.5% five-syllable groups. In some Buddhist texts the four-syllable pattern reaches the same proportions, and the habit is clearly growing with the development, in the course of several decades, of a conventionalized Chinese "scriptural style". The phenomenon has been described by Yoshikawa (1958) and Hrdličková (1958). It is obvious that in such texts the translator may tend to reduce binomes to monosyllables, to expand monosyllabic forms into uncommon or even artificial binomes, to drop verbal complements, or to insert meaningless particles, all this in order to make the narrative fit into the Procrustes bed of the four-syllable pattern.

And, finally, we can assume that the vernacular character of the scriptural idiom was weakened by the very fact of its being written down in a script which had become fully adapted to a largely artificial monosyllabic literary language. Its distorting effects, such as cases of artificial "monosyllabization", can occasionally be observed in our texts.

Some characteristic features of an archaic, largely vernacular text—Lokakṣema's translation of the *Prajñāpāramitā in 8000 stanzas* (*Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*) of 179 CE[8]—can be shown by comparing it with parallel passages as they occur in a much more polished mid-third century version ascribed to Zhi Qian 支謙.[9] A single example may suffice. The loud wailings of the Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita ("Always Weeping") are compared with the laments of a poor victim of injustice.

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	Lokakṣema:
亦無有菩薩所行法則,	"And also there was no norm-and-rule practised by the Bodhisattvas,
用是故甚大愁憂，啼哭而行	and because of that reason he was very much grieved, and he wept and wailed as he went.
譬如人有過於大王所其財產	It sounded like a man who has committed

[8] T 224 *Daoxing jing*.

[9] The work no doubt dates from the mid-third century, but it shows certain terminological peculiarities that plead against the attribution to Zhi Qian. Cf. the article by L. R. Lancaster referred to in note 4.

悉入縣官	a transgression at the great king’s residence—his property is all confiscated by the authorities,[10]
父母及身皆閉在牢獄其人啼哭	and his parents and he himself are locked
愁憂不可言	up in prison—
薩陀波倫菩薩愁憂啼哭如是	that man will weep and wail and be grieved in such a way as cannot be told: in the same way the Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita was grieved, and wept and wailed.”
	Zhi Qian:
國無開士　所行浄法	“Nor was there in (that) land the pure norm practised by the Revealers.
是故哀慟	Therefore he grieved,
如人有過　於國王所	like a man who has committed a transgression at the king’s residence—his property is all confiscated,
財產悉沒	and his parents and he himself are locked
父母及身　閉於牢獄	in prison.”

Here we see the “polisher” at work in various ways: proper names have been translated rather than transcribed (*kaishi* 開士 instead of *pusa* 菩薩), or even left out (as in the case of the cumbrous *Satuobolun* 薩陀波倫) if the context is clear enough. Binominal forms are often replaced by monosyllables (*wu* 無 for *wuyou* 無有; *fa* 法 for *faze* 法則; *mo* 沒 for *moru* 沒入; the bisyllable *laoyue* 牢獄 is maintained *metri causa!*); “vulgar” expressions have been replaced by more regular forms (*shigu* 是故 for *yongshigu* 用是故); the narrative has been concentrated by leaving out irrelevant words and phrases (including the Homeric elaboration of the simile: “that man will weep …”) and finally the whole passage, which in the Han version does not show any metric regularity, is forced into a rigid four-syllable pattern.

Zhi Qian’s polished version of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* is an invaluable yardstick by which “vulgar” (hence probably vernacular) elements can be set

[10] The term *xianguan* 縣官 is used many times in Buddhist texts, and there invariably refers to the administrative officers, “the authorities”, quite distinct from the supreme power of the sovereign (*wang* 王, *dawang* 大王). This is even quite explicit in T 630 (*Chengju guangming dingyi jing*), 457a11; “If there is a worthy born into a noble family, who (later) is charged with general supervision over the (local) administrators …” (*ruo you xianshi, sheng yu zhongxing zhi jia, tongling xianguan* … 若有賢士生於種姓之家，統領縣官), and, *ib*. l. 13: “If a worthy has by his birth a (karmic) affinity with the administration …” (i.c. is destined to become a high official): (*xianshi sheng you xianguan zhi yinyuan* … 賢士生有縣官之因緣). It is nowhere used for the person of the emperor, as is occasionally done in secular Han texts.

apart, and the ways and degrees of stylistic adaptation can be defined in the products of various translators' teams.

3. *Linguistic Features*

As I said above, a number of linguistic traits of the archaic Chinese translations have been described by me elsewhere. Here I shall only mention a number of salient features without textual examples, for which the reader may be referred to the article mentioned in note 2. Some of the most salient features are

– An abundant use of binomes (even in an adverbial position, like *huanfu*
[282] 還復 "again");
– verbal compositions with direction complement (*songchu* 送出 "to send out"; *shequ* 捨去 "to reject");
– a very strong reduction of forms in the pronominal system (e.g. personal pronouns virtually being reduced to *wo* 我 and *ru* 汝);
– the very frequent use of plural suffixes, both simple (*-deng* 等, *-bei* 輩, *-cao* 曹) and composite (*-caodeng*, once even *-caodenbei*);
– the obsolescence of the nominal sentence AB *ye* 也 and the development of copula *shi* 是.

We can conclude that the language of the earliest Buddhist translations is based on a substrate that in a somewhat formalized way reflects the second century spoken language of the metropolitan area. This substrate forms a clearly recognizable system that deviates from the literary language in a very consistent way.

4. *Terminological and Stylistic Features*

The distinctive features of the vernacular substrate figure in every text on our list, but they do not do so to the same extent. In some cases it really forms the substance of the text, without any clearly recognizable classical admixtures; on the other end of the scale we find some texts in which it merely "filters through", being distorted by classical fossilized forms, rhythmical patterns (both in prose and in unrhymed verse), Chinese-type parallelism and other stylistic embellishments. There are, moreover, considerable differences in the ways in which various translators rendered foreign proper names and Buddhist technical expressions: very different

Chinese equivalents have been coined (or borrowed from other sources) to render the same foreign name or concept, and some translators obviously tried to find Chinese terms for everything, whereas others prefer to make frequent use of transcription.

A closer look at those differences in style and terminology will allow us to define certain "schools" of translators; and on the basis of bibliographical and historical evidence these can be arranged in a chronological order. This in turn may enable us to trace the steps of a gradual process of sinicization, eventually resulting in the formation of a distinctly Chinese Buddhist "scriptural style".

(a) *Terminology and Style: Schools and Stages of Development*

Chinese Buddhism starts with a mysterious embryonic phase about which very little is known. There is a gap of about eight decades between the first unquestionable sign of Buddhism in China (65 CE) and the arrival of An Shigao in Luoyang (148 CE) that marks the beginning of regular translation activities. We do not know any literary product of that primeval period; the traditions concerning the so-called *Sūtra in Forty-two Chapters* (*Sishierzhang jing* 四十二章經) supposedly translated under Emperor Ming, are utterly unreliable, and even the most archaic of the many extant versions is probably of post-Han date.[11] Secular sources supply a few bits of very early terminology which are vastly different from anything we know. Terms like *futu* 浮屠 for *buddha, sangmen* 桑門 for *śramana, yipusai* 伊蒲塞 for *upāsaka*[12] are nowhere found in extant Bud-
[283] dhist translations. There is no evidence of any connection between this embryonic Buddhism, with its quaint terminology and its puzzling relations with court and courtiers, and the activities initiated by An Shigao.

The oldest and most primitive nucleus in our materials is formed by the sixteen short scriptures which may be regarded as genuine products of An Shigao and his collaborators. It is a very homogeneous group of texts, clearly recognizable by their linguistic and stylistic features. The language is erratic, crude, full of vulgarisms, often chaotic to the point of unintelligibility. There is a marked preference for translation of technical terms (making free use of non-Buddhist Chinese pseudo-equivalents such as

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[11] The text as we find it in the Korean recension of the Taishō canon (T 784) possibly is a redaction made by Zhi Qian in the period 220–250 CE; cf. Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, *Han Wei liang Jin nanbei-chao fojiao shi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史, Shanghai, 1938, pp. 38–39.

[12] **b'jiəu-d'uo; *sang-muən*; **i-p'uo-sək.*

dao dizi 道弟子 for *bhikṣu* and *dushi wuwei* 度世無爲 for *nirvāṇa*), whereas foreign proper names are mostly transcribed. The style is strikingly "un-Chinese". There is no trace of any concession to Chinese literary taste (or of any familiarity with it): no tendency to impose prosodic patterns on the narrative; no syntactic parallelism; no use of typical fossilized *wenyan* elements. Versified passages are rendered in prose, even when introduced by the words "The following is said in *gāthās*".[13] The works of this type were produced roughly between 150 and 170 CE.

In the next phase (ca. 170–190 CE), the Indo-Scythian Lokakṣema and his collaborators produced a number of translations, seven of which have been preserved. These again form a distinct and very homogeneous type, very different from the products of An Shigao and his school. The language is more natural and intelligible than that of An Shigao; in certain narrative passages it may reach a high level of fluency and liveliness, with abundant use of vernacular elements. On the other hand, Lokakṣema's versions are characterized by a preference for transcriptions of both proper names and technical terms that frequently overburden the narrative with phonetic renderings of up to twelve syllables. There is no sign of Chinese-type literary embellishment. However, we observe the first beginnings of Chinese unrhymed Buddhist verse, made, as it were, with some hesitation: in the same text some originally metrical portions are rendered in prose, whereas other versified passages have been translated into Chinese *gāthās* of 5, 6 or 7 syllables.[14]

Somewhat later, in the 'eighties of the second century, and apparently working in isolation from Lokakṣema's team, the Parthian An Xuan 安玄 and his Chinese collaborator Yan Foutiao 嚴浮調 produced the "mirror of the Dharma", *Fajing jing* 法鏡經 (T 322). This scripture again represents a very distinct type of translation technique. The terminology is very original and differs completely from that of An Shigao and Lokakṣema. Virtually all proper names and technical terms have been translated (sometimes in somewhat bizarre ways: *gougang* 溝港 for *srotaāpanna; dadao* 大道 for *mahāyāna; shujin* for *bhikṣu; miao* 廟 for *vihāra*) and there is some admix-
[284] ture of typical *wenyan* elements. The prose is sometimes prosodic.

13 *Conghou shuojue* 從後說絕 (**dz'iwät* 絕 apparently is a transcription of *gāthā*; the initial remains puzzling) in T150; cf. in T 607 the curious formula *Conghou fushushuo* 從后縛束說, "The following is said in a bound (=metrical?) way". The common *jie* (**g'iät*) 偈 for *gāthā* occurs for the first time in Lokakṣema's *Banzhou sanmei jing* (T 418).

14 The Korean recension of T 418 is the only one in which the *prose* parts which render the *gāthās* of the original have been preserved (T 418, 906ab and 907bc); in the other redactions they have been transposed into Chinese *gāthās* as well.

A third generation of translators was active near the end of the second and in the early third century CE. The first of these was the Indo-Scythian Zhi Yao 支曜 whose *Chengju guangming dingyi jing* 成具光明定意經 (T 630) again appears to be a highly individual creation. All proper names and technical terms are rendered by Chinese equivalents which do not occur in the works of earlier translators. Most striking is the literary style of this work. The language is more classical than that of any other Han Buddhist text; the prosodical four-syllable pattern is carried to extremes (comprising more than 60% of the prose narrative), and there are many examples of the purest Chinese-type parallelism;[15] *gāthās* are rendered in unrhymed verse.

In the early years of the third century, two or possibly three translators, the Sogdian Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 and the Indians Zhu Dali 竺大力 and Zhu Tanguo 竺曇果 (Mahābala and Dharmaphala?) made a Chinese version of a *Life of the Buddha*, the two parts of which were produced as two distinct scriptures (T 184: *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經, and T 196: *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經). In these works, the literary influence is very marked: frequent use of *wenyan* elements and stylistic embellishment, Chinese-type parallelism, and a very regular prosodic pattern. The *gāthās* are rendered in unrhymed verse of varying lengths, often with great sophistication. The new element is terminological syncretism. Foreign names and Buddhist expressions are rendered by means of a mixed vocabulary borrowed from various earlier translators, resulting in a great variety of forms that serves a double purpose: to avoid monotony, and to enable the translator to conform to the four-syllable pattern by choosing a prosodically suitable rendering. From a literary point of view these two Buddha biographies are no doubt the most sophisticated products of Han Buddhism. Shortly after the fall of the Han (in the period 220–250 CE) the whole of T 184 and the first part of T 196, together with some passages drawn from two other sources, were combined and re-edited by Zhi Qian

[15] E.g. T 630, 453b, a passage which reads like a Chinese essay:
"whilst dwelling in the house of instability/
his mind thinks of the protection (afforded by) Expediency"
"whilst staying in the pit of snakes/
his mind contemplates on the path of Abandonment . . .
猗不固之屋，心思方便之護;
坐蛇蚖之地，心念捨遠之徑
and so on, through a series of nine couples of paired phrases, interrupted, in true parallel style, by the words *Shigu kaishi* 是故開士, "Therefore the Revealer . . .", after which the 5–6 metre is resumed.

under the title *Taizi ruiying benqi jing* 太子瑞應本起經 (T 185). As incorporated into this composite narrative, the Han account of the Buddha's life was for centuries to remain one of the most popular texts of early Chinese Buddhism.

(b) *Early Buddhist Scriptural Style: The Process of Sinicization*

The pattern that emerges from this chronological survey is very clear. Even in this very early period of Chinese Buddhism, we observe a process of gradual digestion of the literary "alien bodies" that were introduced from outside into the world of Chinese civilization. A common semi-literary idiom, deeply influenced by the vernacular, became increasingly conventionalized by the formation of a whole set of typically Chinese stylistic and terminological features. As early as the third century CE a distinctly Chinese Buddhist "scriptural style" had developed, as different from Chinese secular literature as from its Indian prototypes; in its turn it became frozen into a kind of canonical language and divorced from the living language.

Several forces were at work in shaping the terminological and stylistic conventions of this vast literature: the persisting influence of the Indian original; the influence of classical Chinese; the role of the translator's personal inventivity in creating new forms and ways of expression or in borrowing them from other sources.

At the level of terminology, it is quite clear that the translators, faced with the problem of faithfully rendering non-Chinese names and terms, in
[285] the Later Han period oscillated between two extremes: maximum adherence to the Indian original (hence maximal transliteration, of which Lokakṣema's *Daoxing jing*, T 224, with its monstrosities like *pusa-mohesa-moheyan-sengnie* 菩薩摩訶薩摩訶衍僧那僧涅: *bodhisattva-mahāsattva-mahāyāna-saṃnāha-saṃnaddha* is the most glaring example), or maximum intelligibility (hence total translation, even avoiding such well-known borrowings as *biqiu* 比丘 (*bhikṣu*) and *nihuan* 泥洹 (*nirvāṇa*), and replacing them with Chinese "equivalents" like *chujin* 除饉 and *miedu* 滅度). But in the end both extremes disappeared. In the late third century a mixed vocabulary had crystallized, in which both transcriptions and translation played their part, in a rather consistent way.

As far as translating names and terms is concerned, independent invention and borrowing both played important roles. In many cases we recognize the fruits of personal inventiveness. Expressions like *shanlai* 善來 "welcome" (= *svāgata*), *rulai* 如來 "thus-come" (*tathāgata*) and *zuxingzi*

族姓子 "son of good family" (*kulaputra*) obviously are neologisms; so are also some curious mixed translations like *hengsha* 恒沙, "sand of the Ganges" (*gaṅgānadīvālukā*) and *chatu* 刹土, "field, region" (*kṣetra*). In some cases we have to do with misguided creativity, probably based on wrong information supplied by the foreign master: *du* 度, "crossing" for *pāramitā* is based on a false etymology (*param* + *ita*, "gone beyond"), and *weicengyou* 未曾有, for "marvellous" (*adbhuta*) is derived from a misinterpretation of a Prākrit form (*abbuta*, mistaken for *abhūta* "not become").

The use of Chinese native terminology in rendering Buddhist ideas will be discussed more extensively in the next section. Here it will suffice to say that, in general, terminological borrowings clearly derived from the Confucian tradition are rare; that some basic terms have obviously been taken over from popular Daoism, and in a number of interesting and puzzling cases the Chinese redactors appear to have drawn their inspiration from obscure local cults and beliefs with which they were somehow associated—a fact that in one case is supported by epigraphical evidence.

But here again the extremes have been obliterated in the course of the process we are describing. The most glaring Daoist borrowings eventually disappeared from the scriptural idiom. For *nirvāṇa* the older Chinese "equivalents" were supplanted by a transcription, and *pusa* took the place of *mingshi* 明士 and *kaishi*. Lokakṣema's remarkable *trouvaille benwu* 本無 for *tathatā* ("suchness", indicating the metaphysical Emptiness underlying all phenomenal existence) was rejected in favour of the neologism *zhenru* 真如. Thus, Buddhist terminology gradually gained its own identity, and the wild experiments of the founding fathers never were repeated.

At the level of style and composition we see that analogous forces are at work in shaping a fairly uniform scriptural style, and here the pattern is even more clear.

[286] As far as the influence of the Indian original is concerned, it is obvious that the first translators' teams were, so to speak, helplessly and passively undergoing the impact of these literary intrusions from another world. *Wenyan* conventions and stylistic features may have been unknown to them, but even if they had had some classical training, they may have been unable to apply it to a body of texts so completely alien to Chinese literary tradition.

Gradually, however, some features of Chinese literary style and composition were introduced by the successive generations of translators. The most striking example is the increasing use of the prosodic four-syllable pattern in prose, a stylistic convention that played a dominating role in secular classical literature of the period. The stages are very clear: total

absence in the works of An Shigao and Lokakṣema, occasional appearance in the 'eighties of the second century (An Xuan, T 322); universal application in the latest Han translations. It was to remain dominant in all later Chinese Buddhist scriptures.

The same holds good for one of the most characteristic features of Chinese classical composition: the rigid pattern of paired sentences showing semantic and syntactic parallelism. It can nowhere be found in the earliest translations, not even in the *Fajing jing* by An Xuan which otherwise contains quite a number of *wenyan* elements. It only appears at the end of the second and in the early third century in the texts that also in other respects are deeply influenced by Chinese literary conventions.

The case of what may be considered as the most characteristic feature of Chinese scriptural idiom, the so-called "prosimetric form",[16] is somewhat different: here we have to do not with a one-way intrusion of Chinese stylistic conventions into an emerging scriptural idiom, but with the formation of a *new* stylistic device, developed under the stimulus of the Indian example, and, as far as we know, not inspired by any pre-existing Chinese literary pattern. Alternation of prose and versified passages (*gāthās*, sometimes translated as *song* 頌, sometimes transcribed as *jie* 偈 or *jue* 絕) formed an integral part of the Indian literary tradition. Sometimes they are placed at the end of a sermon, summarizing its essential content; in other cases (particularly in scholastic treatises) they introduce the work as a whole (laudatory stanzas addressed to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha), or they precede the individual sections of the work in the form of extremely concentrated mnemonic verses (*kārikā*). Mostly, however, they are embedded in a continuous narrative. In a prose context, the versified portions often render direct speech, being introduced by such formulas as "and then, speaking in *gāthās*, he said…". But direct speech may also end somewhere in the middle of the hymn, which then goes on to describe other happenings in verse, or, on the contrary, only a part of the *oratio recta* may have *gāthā* form, the prose monologue or prose dialogue suddenly ranting into verse, and from verse into prose again.

All these were elements of a great foreign literary tradition which, once transplanted into China, had to find its own means of expression. The complicated patterns of Indian metre could not be expressed in Chinese,

[16] For this term see V. Hrdličková, "The first translations of Buddhist sūtras in Chinese literature and their place in the development of story-telling", *Archiv Orientální* 26, 1958, pp. 114–144.

and it was equally impossible to retain the original palmodic melodies to
[287] which the *gāthās* had to be sung. Both the metric form of the text and the musical form of the recitative had to be adapted to the nature of the Chinese language and the conventions of Chinese musical art.

This process started early, and our Han materials allow us to observe its various stages. In the very first phase (An Shigao and his collaborators) the translators evidently were at a loss what to do with the *gāthās.* The introductory stanzas of the *Daodi jing* 道地經 (T 607) are rendered in clumsy prose, and in several other texts of this school the words "the following is said in *gāthās*" are followed, somewhat paradoxically, by passages in prose.

One generation later, Lokakṣema occasionally attempts to introduce Chinese unrhymed stanzas, whereas in other passages—even in the same scripture—verse is turned into prose. Anyhow, by this occasional use of unrhymed Chinese verse Lokakṣema introduced a literary device that would for centuries remain characteristic of Chinese "scriptural style". As such it was a step of momentous importance, for the prosimetric style to which he (or rather his Chinese collaborators) had given the start was to find its way, via Buddhist *bianwen* 變文 and their secular counterparts, into later Chinese popular literature, where it would survive till modern times.

It is unknown whether this Chinese response to the Indian *gāthās* tradition was a free invention or a borrowing from an unknown native source. Two of Lokakṣema's collaborators are known to have been patrons of some obscure local cult, and it would be tantalizing to suppose that through them some kind of popular incantation may have been introduced into the translation work in which they themselves were engaged. But this is pure speculation. For all we know, earlier and contemporary Chinese lyrics were universally characterized by the use of rhyme (it is true that a number of Odes of the *Song* 頌 section of the *Book of Songs* are rhymeless, but even granting the fact that *gāthās* are often called *song*, it would be too far-fetched to regard this as more than coincidental; *song*, for *gāthā*, obviously just means "laudatory hymn"). Daoist hymns and other versified texts cannot have been a source of inspiration (even if we suppose that such texts existed as early as the second century CE), for in early Daoist scriptures the stanzas invariably are rhyming, even in texts that are deeply influenced by the Buddhist scriptural style.

The Chinese device thus created was very simple. Han scriptures contain stanzas of four, five or seven syllables. Cases of *enjambement* are very rare: in general, each verse forms either a full independent sentence (e.g.,

xin qi xiang ze chi 心起想則癡 [T 418 (xiii) 906a9]) or at least a well-defined clause forming part of a more complex sentence (e.g. *Song shi sanmei shi, sile zuo shamen* 誦是三昧時，思樂作沙門 [T 418 (xiii) 910b25]). The short (3, 4 or 5 syllable) lines just consist of so many syllables without any further internal prosodical pattern. In 7-syllable *gāthās*, however, we observe an interesting phenomenon, no doubt inspired by secular poetry: there is a distinct attempt to put a caesura after the fourth syllable, even in the earliest examples.[17]

After the first attempts by Lokakṣema's team, we see how the prosimetric form becomes more sophisticated. It culminates, as far as Han scriptures are concerned, in the Buddha biographies of the early third century (T 184
[288] and T 196), which contain several dozens of versified passages. Whereas in the earliest specimens (Lokakṣema, Zhi Yao) the *gāthā* passages are mere "blocks" of direct speech, we find here all patterns of alternation (direct speech turning into description, and the reverse, within a single poetic passage) which lend a special flavour to the narrative. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the epic description of the Buddha's struggle with Māra in T 184 in liveliness and dramatic power far surpasses anything written in Chinese secular literature of the period.

A third area of invention and experiment was created by the necessity to render the numerous stereotyped formulas and standard passages found in every Buddhist text. In their original form the Indian *clichés* are completely stereotyped elements, a kind of literary modules that may range from one sentence or short paragraph (e.g. the well-known opening and closing sentences of any *sūtra* or the formula describing how a person politely inquires after the Buddha's health) to whole passages (such as the elaborate description of the happy reign of a Universal King, or the long sequence beginning with the Buddha emitting a radiance that pervades the whole universe and then smiling, and finally uttering the prophecy of someone's future Buddhahood).

In trying to coin suitable Chinese equivalents, the earliest translators show two tendencies, both of which bear the stamp of "Chinese taste": condensation and variation. In rendering the literary *clichés* the trans-

[17] Clearly observable in the seven-syllable *gāthās* in Lokakṣema's *Banzhou sanmei jing* (T 418) of 179 CE, e.g. (611b),

佛語阿難, 汝見不;
五百人等, 在前立;
其心歡然歌頌曰:
我等亦當逮得法 etc.

lators (or rather the Chinese redactors) time and again appear to have made concessions to the Chinese predilection for terse and concentrated description by leaving out stages, cutting out unessential elements, and thus reducing the Indian luxuriant verbosity of the original. In the same way, there is a strong tendency to avoid the monotonous effect of another characteristic feature of the Indian scriptural style: the verbatim repetition of whole passages, by introducing a certain amount of diversification and irregularity. The Chinese eventually did create a number of formulas (thus the opening words *Evaṃ mayā śrūtam* "So I have heard" soon became *wen rushi* 聞如是, since the late fourth century—probably for metric reasons—supplanted by *rushi wo wen* 如是我聞), but in the early period such formulas never were as rigidly stereotyped as their Indian prototypes, and in the same translated scripture we often find various alternative forms and longer or shorter versions of the same *cliché.*

The process of sinicization which we have traced in terminology, style and composition thus resulted in the formation of a distinctly Chinese form of literary expression; in its essential features this scriptural style had already become conventionalized in the early third century—barely seventy years after An Shigao's first primitive attempts. In this respect, as in so many others, the Han experience has been decisive.

5. *The Chinese Audience*

We may start from two self-evident facts: we are dealing with products of translation, and those translated *sūtras* were written down. Both facts have a whole range of implications which cannot be elaborated here. For
[289] our present subject it is important to note that, in the first place, the translation effort, which appears to have started soon after An Shigao's arrival at Luoyang around 148 CE and which was quite productive (yielding, according to Dao'an, some seventy *juan* 卷 of Chinese versions in the first forty years), implies that there must have been a Chinese *clientèle* large enough to warrant such an undertaking. And, secondly, the production of such a considerable body of written texts is highly significant. We do not know to what extent oral propagation played a role as well, but the very existence of our texts proves that Buddhism primarily addressed itself to an educated minority.

On the other hand, the linguistic and stylistic features make clear that when dealing with these archaic scriptures we are very far removed from the literary culture of the true elite. In most texts the language is rather

primitive and clumsy; the vocabulary is limited and repetitive, and seen in the more "sophisticated" scriptures we hardly find any conventional expressions borrowed from the Chinese high-class literary tradition.

We may conclude that these texts circulated among a public of Chinese lay devotees with rudimentary schooling, standing outside the elite of scholar-officials, but sufficiently literate to read these texts with their limited vocabulary and their unadorned style. In the context of the urban society of Later Han times, one may think of a sub-elite of clerics and copyists, the lowest fringe of the bureaucracy, and traders and artisans. The propagation of Buddhism at the intermediate level would also explain why the official historical records do not contain a single reference to this "Church of Luoyang", and why there is no evidence of any connection between the hybrid court Buddhism mentioned in secular historiography and the activities of the Buddhist missionaries at Luoyang.

There probably were no fully ordained Chinese monks before the third century CE.[18] However, this does not mean that the scriptures offered to the Chinese devotees were limited to the kind of "edifying texts" that were primarily destined to be read by the lay public. On the contrary: most Han scriptures are highly technical and scholastic, and they treat subjects that normally belong to the practice of monastic Buddhism, such as *dhyāna* exercises, respiratory techniques, numerical categories, themes of contemplation, and the constituent elements of the pseudo-personality. Lay believers apparently took part in such exercises—in fact, around the middle of the third century a certain Chen Hui 陳慧, no doubt a layman, is known to have expounded the highly scholastic *Yin chi ru jing* 陰持入經 and the treatise on "Respiratory Concentration", *Anban shouyi jing*, both translated by An Shigao.[19]

It therefore seems that the fundamental distinction between monastic and lay Buddhism had not yet taken shape, as far as the Chinese believers were concerned. There are, however, some signs indicating that among the laity itself there was a certain diversity of interests, some believers being attracted by the simple and easily digestible teachings of lay Buddhism, and other by the *arcana* of Buddhist scholasticism and contemplation.

[18] According to *Gaoseng zhuan* (T 2059, p. 324c) An Xuan's collaborator Yan Foutiao was a *śramaṇa*, a fully ordained monk. However, in the corresponding passage in *Chu sanzang ji ji* (T 2145, 96a) it is only said that he had "left the household", *chujia* 出家, an expression that is also used for one who has joined the Order as a novice. In fact, the only work which he has produced independently was a treatise on the "Ten Rules for the Novice", cf. *Buddhist Conquest*, pp. 55–56.

[19] Cf. note 4 above, and *Buddhist Conquest*, pp. 53–54.

[290] ### 6. *The Believers and the Experts*

If we inventorize the stylistic and terminological features of the extant Han scriptures, there are four texts that form a distinctive category of their own.

(1) T 322 "The *sūtra* of the Mirror of the Doctrine", *Fajing jing*, translated by An Xuan, ca. 180 CE;
(2) T 630, "The *sūtra* on the Mental Fixation of Integral Illumination", *Chengju guangming dingyi jing*, attributed to the late second century translator Zhi Yao.
Both texts are characterized by a considerable number of classical admixtures, a very idiosyncratic terminology (e.g. *chujin* and *chue* 除惡 for *bhikṣu*), and, above all, the fact that the translators have done their utmost to translate everything into Chinese, even including proper names such as *Wenwu guo* 聞物國 for Śrāvastī. This peculiarity—which by itself would already suggest an attempt to cater to the taste of a fairly cultured "non-professional" public—becomes even more relevant if we look at the contents of T 322 and T 680: they are the only Han scriptures in which a detailed description is given of the moral duties and devotional practices of the lay believer, or, as T 322 calls him, "the Bodhisattva who practices the Way while staying in the household".
(3) T 184, "The *sūtra* on the Origin of (Religious) Practice", *Xiuxing benqi jing*, and
(4) T 196, "The Middle (Part) of the *sūtra* on the Origin (of Religious Practice)", *Zhang benqi jing*, both translated by the Sogdian Kang Mengxiang, with the assistance of the Indian monks Zhu Dali and Zhu Tanguo, around 200 CE.[20]
The two texts, which contain an account of the Buddha's career from the prophecy of his future Buddhahood under Dīpaṃkara to the mid-

[20] The *Xiuxing benqi jing* is not mentioned by Sengyou in his *Chu sanzang ji ji*, but the authenticity of the text as a late Han translation is beyond all doubt. In the first place it forms a continuous whole with T 196 (the last paragraph of T 184 actually is repeated *verbatim* at the beginning of T 196); in the second place, its early date is proved by the fact that many passages from it have been incorporated into Zhi Qian's "polished" version of the Buddha's life (T 185, *Taizi ruiying benqi jing*), and, thirdly, the text contains a number of glosses introduced by the words *Han yan* 漢言 . . ., which points to a date before 220 CE. T 196 is explicitly attributed to Kang Mengxiang and Zhu Tanguo in *Gaoseng zhuan* I, 324c, probably on the basis of an early colophon.

> dle part of his ministration, actually form one continuous narrative. The style is rather literary, with many *wenyan* elements and a regular rhythmic four-syllable pattern. The quality of Kang Mengxiang's style, its "grace and fluency"[21] is quite conspicuous; the combined text of T 184/T 196 no doubt forms the most readable, and even enjoyable, part of archaic Chinese Buddhist literature. The religious message of the narrative is simple and direct: feats of supernatural power, moral rules, edifying anecdotes, and stories about the retribution of sins. Purely doctrinal matters play a minor role.

We can conclude that these scriptures constitute the "popularizing sector" in Han Buddhist literature—elementary texts written in a semi-classical style, preaching a rather simple kind of morality: the Three Refuges; the Five Rules of lay Buddhism; devotion; love towards all creatures; the impermanence of all things, and the inevitability of karmic retribution. The texts sharply contrast with the other prevailing type of Han scriptures: the much more vernacular and generally abstruse scriptures of a more specialized nature, which emphasize mental discipline and *dhyāna* practices, respiratory techniques, the ecstatic "visualization" of Buddhas, the contemplation of the impure, the eradication of all desire (*chu yu* 除欲) and of all uncontrolled mental activity (*xinyi* 心意).

[291] It may well be that the latter type of scriptures reflects the interests of another group of devotees within the same subculture: not the simple *upāsakas* looking for moral guidelines and a new type of religious piety, but the active practicants attracted by a master like An Shigao, who already in his life-time appears to have been regarded as a powerful magician.[22]

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[21] Remark made by Dao'an, *yiyi liubian* 奕奕流便, reported in *Chu sanzang ji ji* XIII, 96a.

[22] An Shigao's biography in *CSZJJ* and *GSZ* is a mosaic of miraculous stories, some of which are extremely interesting. But some of An Shigao's supernatural powers (such as telling the future and understanding the language of the birds) are already described in Kang Senghui's preface to the *Anban shouyi jing* (*CSZJJ* VI 43b), and this information was no doubt supplied by the three devotees from An Shigao's school who transmitted the scripture to him. And in an anonymous preface (the author only refers to himself as Mi 密—apparently his personal name) to Chen Hui's early third century commentary on the *Yin chi ru jing* (T 1694 9b15–16), again from the same school, An Shigao is referred to as "a bodhisattva of universal manifestations" (*An hou Shigao zhe, puxian pusa ye* 安侯世高者，普見菩薩也). This may be mere rhetoric—but it could also be related to the curious stories about An Shigao's miraculous adventures in North, Central, and South China, in successive lives, such as we find in his GSZ "biography".

7. *Buddhism and Indigenous Chinese Traditions: The Exotic Alternative*

In spite of occasional (and surprisingly rare) terminological borrowings from Confucian and Daoist lore, the most striking aspect of Han Buddhism is its novelty. The view that Buddhism was accepted because it, in certain ways, accorded with indigenous traditions must be rejected; Buddhism was attractive not because it sounded familiar, but because it was something basically new. Certain concepts and practices bore a superficial resemblance to Daoist notions, but the basic difference in orientation and application must have been obvious right from the start. In Daoism, breath control serves to accumulate the vital essence inside the body; in Buddhism, *ānāpāna* is practised as a mental tranquilizer before entering meditation. In Daoism, sexual techniques are used as a means to achieve salvation; in Buddhism, all desire—and sexual desire in particular—is a negative force; rebirth as a woman is the result of karmic sin, and the female body is an instrument of moral destruction.[23] And, most important of all, the Daoist belief in the possibility of bodily immortality is incompatible with the Buddhist idea that *all* bodily existence—even that of the gods—is transitory and doomed to decay. And here, again, the opposition appears to be reflected by the written language, for the hybrid, semi-vemacular idiom of the Buddhist texts completely differs from the simple but regular *wenyan* of the earliest Daoist scriptures and commentaries.

If Han Buddhism, in its most essential aspects, was not a variant from but rather a distinct alternative to Daoism, the same must be said of its relation to Confucian ethics. It is true that lay morality includes a number of rules that basically accord with Confucian norms of social behaviour; observing ones' duties towards relatives and other dependents; temperance; sincerity in social relations, and indifference to worldly praise or blame. But even in the two scriptures which exclusively deal with the moral and religious duties of the Buddhist layman, the essential message is hardly compatible with Confucian ethics. In all his actions, the lay devotee should consider the transitoriness of all things and the inanity of all worldly relations.[24] Even when serving his parents and showing love to his children he should regard the household as a prison and his relatives

[23] The female lay devotee should perform her religious observance three times a day, and each time "she should devoutly implore (the Buddha), always wishing to get rid of her female body" (至心懇惻,常愿離於女人之身 TT 630, 457b).
[24] T 322, 16bc.

as dangerous enemies.[25] He should train himself to feel no special attachment to his nearest kin, for his love should go to all creatures; and, after all, why love your son more than all those fellow-creatures in the world, who may have been your sons and daughters in innumerable former lives?[26] Far from accommodating with the rules of Confucian social ethics, Han Buddhism preached a detached attitude towards even the nearest relatives, coupled with an ideal of "universal love" far more radical and comprehensive than anything that could be found in traditional Chinese thought.

[292] The same universalistic and non-familial kind of morality is found time and again in T 630. In the fifty-five moral rules for lay devotees (fifteen for high officials, ten for commoners, twenty-five for noble ladies, and ten for common women) the specific virtues of family life (filial piety, brotherly love, etc.) which form the very heart of Confucian ethics, are hardly touched upon. Only in the rules for "noble ladies" the theme of her obligations towards husband and near relatives are mentioned in passing. For the rest the full emphasis is on ethical behaviour towards the world at large, or towards specific groups of people beyond the family (the poor and destitute; servants and slaves; the people under one's jurisdiction; even sinners who should be kindly treated and converted).

Here, again, we may find a most un-Confucian position of Buddhist lay ethics reflected in the terminology of our scriptures, in which clear Confucian borrowings are extremely rare.

But are we not, after all, on a wrong track by trying to define the ideological position of Han Buddhism in terms of the easy dichotomy "Confucian/Daoist"? Chinese society of the second century CE—and for centuries afterwards—was not a "Confucian society" as we know it from late imperial times. Confucianism was represented by an extremely small elite—a very thin top layer, under which there was an immense variety of local beliefs, cults and religious practices.

In many cases these may have been variations within a common fund of religious and magical lore without any special affinity either to Confucianism or to Daoism. In fact, the terminology of Buddhist texts contains a number of quaint Chinese "equivalents" that look like borrowings from unknown sources of Chinese religious lore. What is the background of the very common archaic term *yin* 陰, "dark(ening) element"(?), as used for

[25] T 322, 17b–28a.
[26] T 322, 18a–c.

skandha, the constituent parts of the human person? Why is the universal ruler (*cakravartin*) referred to as a "flying emperor", *feixing huangdi* 飛行皇帝? Why are the gods (*deva*) called *tian* 天? Is the term "subterranean prison", *diyu* 地獄, a Buddhist neologism, or does it reflect some popular belief concerning the fate of sinners after death? It may well be that further analysis of archaic Buddhist terminology will teach us more about this unexplored zone of Han popular religion.

If one would try to indicate, in most general terms, what may have been the special appeal of a doctrine that so clearly rejected some of the most firmly established ideas of the age, the answer probably would lie in the Buddhist preoccupation with Impermanence, its (sometimes almost morbid) insistence on the transitoriness of all pleasure, on death and decay, and mental purification as the only way to escape from it.

As Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎 has shown,[27] the awareness of impermanence, the "fleeting life" with its sorrows and sad partings, had become a dominant theme in the Late Han period. Buddhism showed how this *vanitas* forms the very substance of all existence, and, at the same time, offered a way out which was comparatively simple: eternity could be gained by the radical destruction of all desire.

[293] It did so, in this very early phase, without any tendency to compromise. It was not the semi-Daoist mongrel which it is sometimes held to be: on the contrary, it was not yet domesticated. It may therefore have recruited its first followers not from the many who expected familiar answers, but rather from marginal elements who were prepared to break with tradition. Therefore it was, in spite of its almost microscopic scale, a ferment in Late Han society. As a radically alternative way to individual salvation it reminds one of those alien and obscure cults which at the other end of the Euro-Asiatic continent, and roughly in the same period, became popular all over the Roman empire, and even of the "orientalizing" sub-cultures of our own age. The universality of the phenomenon may, after all, justify the attention we have given to the very first stage of Chinese Buddhism—that tiny exotic plant flowering on the ruins of the Han empire.

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27 Notably in his brilliant analysis of the *Nineteen Old Poems* and their persistent theme of "sorrow at the passing of time": "*Suii no hiai* (*Koshi jūkyūshu no shudai* 推移の悲哀 (古詩十九首の主題))", *Chūgoku bungakuhō*, 14, 1961, pp. 1–21.

[297] *Appendix*
Buddhist Texts of the Later Han Period

I. Translations made by An Shigao (active ca. 150–170 CE)

I.1 T 13 (*Chang ahan*) *shi baofa jing* (長阿含) 十報法經, 1 j.
Classification of terms in groups of ten, with short explanation.

I.2 T 14 *Ren ben yu sheng jing* 人本欲生經, 1 j.
Explanation of the twelve members of the Chain of Causation.

I.3 T 31 *Yiqie liu she shou yin jing* 一切流攝守因經, 1 j.
Very short text explaining the way to extirpate the Impurities (*āsrava*).

I.4 T 32 *Si di jing* 四諦經, 1 j.
Exposition of the Four Noble Truths.

I.5 T 36 *Ben xiang yi zhi jing* 本相猗 (v. 倚) 致經, 1 j.
Causal series leading from "bad company", via "unbelief", "wrong thoughts" . . . to "desire", and the opposite series, leading from "good company" to "emancipation".

I.6 T 48 *Shi fa fei fa jing* 是法非法經, 1 j.
Examples showing how the viruous monk will never boast of his religious attainments, and how he who is lacking in virtue will become arrogant, to his own detriment.

I.7 T 57 *Lou fenbu jing* 漏分布經, 1 j.
Scholastic enumeration of the Impurities, Sense-desires, Feelings, Perceptions, etc., together with their causal factors and their bad consequences.

I.8 T 98 *Pu fayi jing* 普法義經, 1 j.
Various series of 12, 20, 16 . . . etc. factors, every series being either conducive or obstructive to Emancipation.

I.9 T 112 *Ba zheng dao jing* 八正道經, 1 j.
The eight bad ways of action and the eight good ways of action that constitute the Eightfold Path.

I.10 T 150 *Qi chu san guan jing* 七出三觀經, 2 j.
A collection of 47 very short *sūtras*, 30 or which have their Pāli counterparts in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*. Various numerical series of phenomena, actions, attitudes, and human types.

I.11 T 602 *Da anban shouyi jing* 大安般守意經, 2 j.
Treatise describing the practice of "Respiratory Concentration" (*ānāpāna-smṛti*), together with a commentary that has become inextricably mixed up with the text.

I.12 T 603 *Yin chi ru jing*, 1 j.
Scholastic compendium dealing with sense-perception, the four bases of supernatural power, the five powers, etc.

I.13 T605 *Chanxing faxiang jing* 禪行法想經, 1 j.
Very short text containing a list of themes for contemplation.

[298] I.14 T 607 *Daodi jing*, 1 j.
Primitive translation of Saṅgharakṣa's *Yogācārabhūmi*, a treatise on *dhyāna*.

I.15 T 792 (*Fo shuo*) *fa shou chen jing* (佛說) 法受塵經, 1 j.
Very short text explaining how sexual desire obstructs the way to insight and true happiness.

I.16 T 1508 *Ahan koujie shi'er yinyuan jing* 阿含口解十二因緣經, 1 j.
Commonly, but no doubt wrongly, attributed to An Xuan; the attribution to An Shigao made by Dao'an is substantiated by the terminology. An exegetical work explaining, *inter alia*, the Chain of Causation, the composition and functions of the body, the elements as the causes of diseases, etc.

II. Translations by Zhi Loujiachen 支婁迦讖 (? Lokakṣema) (active ca. 170–190 CE)

II.1 T 224 *Daoxing* (*banruo*) *jing* 道行 (般若) 經, 10 j.
The earliest translation of the "Perfection of wisdom in Eight Thousand Stanzas", *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*; the title is borrowed from the heading of the first chapter (*Daoxing pin* 道行品).

II.2 T 280 (*Fo shuo*) *dousha jing* (佛說) 兜沙經, 1 j.
Short *sūtra* containing a description of the miraculous apparition of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from all directions of space and an enumeration of their names. The title is unexplained.

II.3 T 313 *Achu fo guo jing* 阿閦佛國經, 1 j.
"Pure Land"-type *sūtra* devoted to the glorification of Akṣobhya, the Buddha of the Eastern Paradise.

II.4 T 418 *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經, 3 j.
The earliest version of the *Bhadrapāla-sūtra* (the title is a transcription of *Pratyutpanna-samādhi-sūtra*), dealing with the power of this *samādhi* that enables the devotee to visualize the Buddha Amitābha. Only the Korean recension of T 418 represents Lokakṣema's original translation; the other recensions contain a great number of interpolations and variants that probably were borrowed from a late third century version by Dharmarakṣa. In the Taishō canon this text is preceded by a shorter version (T 417, 1 j.) with the same title and also bearing the name of Lokakṣema. Internal evidence proves that it actually is a later "polished" extract based upon T 418. A detailed study of the complicated textual problems is found in Paul Harrison, *The Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra, an annotated English translation of the Tibetan version* (PhD. dissertation, A.N.U.), Canberra, 1979, Appendix A, esp. pp. 200–235. Harrison concludes that chapters 1–6 of the Korean recension go back to Lokakṣema's original translation; that the prose of chapters 7–26 of all recensions may with some hesitation also be attributed to Lokakṣema, but that the *gāthās* are the work of a somewhat later
[299] hand. The text, with which chapters 1–6 have been conflated is another early version; its attribution to Dharmarakṣa is rejected by Harrison on stylistic grounds.

II.5 T 458 *Wenshushili wen pusa shu jing* 文殊師利問菩薩署經, 1 j.
Exposition of the stages of the Bodhisattva career, explained in terms of the doctrine of universal Emptiness. The *sūtra* shows an interesting affinity with the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa.*

II.6 T 350 *Yi ri moni bao jing* 遺日摩尼寶經, 1 j.
Archaic translation of the *Kāśyapaparivarta*, about the Bodhisattva career and the doctrine of Emptiness.

II.7 T 626 *Asheshi wang jing* 阿闍世王經, 2 j.
Mahāyāna treatment of the theme of King Ajātaśatru of Magadha being tortured by remorse after having killed his father, he is converted by the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

II.8 T 807 (*Fo shuo*) *neizang baibao jing* (佛說) 內藏百寶經, 1 j.
A mahāyānistic interpretation of the Buddha's life as a series of "magical performances" intended to lead all beings to salvation.

III. Translation by An Xuan and Yan Foutiao (active ca. 180 CE)

III.1 T 322 *Fajing jing*, 1 j.
Earliest translation of the *Ugra*(*datta*)-*paripṛcchā*, in which the Buddha explains the duties of the lay believer to the householder Ugra(datta), in Mahāyānistic terms.

IV. Translations by Kang Mengxiang, Zhu Dali (? Mahābala) and Zhu Tanguo (? Dharmapala) (active ca. 200 CE)

IV.1 T 184 *Xiuxing benqi jing*, 2 j.
Account of the early part of the Buddha's career, from the prophecy of his future Buddhahood under Dīpaṃkara to the happenings in the first days after his Enlightenment.

IV.2 TT 196 *Zhong benqi jing*, 2 j.
Actually the second half of a continuous "life of the Buddha", of which T 184 is the first part. Account of the middle part of the Buddha's career, and some later episodes.

V. Translation attributed to Zhi Yao (late second century)

V.1 T 630 *Chengju guangming dingyi jing*, 1 j.
Mahāyāna scripture treating two different subjects. The first part is devoted to the Six Perfections (*pāramitā*) and the "Mental Concentration of Integral Illumination". The second part contains a description of the moral and religious duties of various classes of lay devotees.

[300] VI. Three archaic texts with doubtful attributions.

VI.1 T 105 *Wu yin piyu jing* 五陰譬喻經, 1 j.
Very short text containing a number of stereotyped similes illustrating the unreality of the five constituent elements (*skandha*) of the pseudo-person. Attributed by Dao'an to An Shigao. The text is no doubt archaic, but style and terminology are definitely not those of An Shigao and his team.

VI.2 T 109 *Zhuan falun jing* 轉法輪經, 1 j.
Archaic translation of the Buddha's first sermon held at Benares, with an introductory passage that does not appear in any other known version. Attributed by Dao'an to An Shigao, but the text con-

tains stylistic features and *wenyan* admixtures that do not normally appear in An Shigao's translations.

VI.3 T 624 *Dunzhentuoluo suo wen rulai sanmei jing* 伅真陀羅所問如來三昧經, 3 j.

Archaic translation of the *Druma-kiṃnararāja-paripṛcchā*. Very elaborate text, largely consisting of numerical series, in which both the Buddha and King Druma (the ruler of the semi-human beings called *kiṃnara*) explain and glorify the Bodhisattva career and the Mahāyāna doctrine of universal Emptiness. The scripture culminates in the prophecy of King Druma's future Buddahood. Listed as "lost" by Sengyou 僧祐 (CSZJJ II, 6b); in the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* of 730 CE and later catalogues it is again mentioned as an existing text attributed to Lokakṣema. In view of the style and terminology it may certainly be regarded as a Han scripture, albeit with some hesitation as regards its attribution to Lokakṣema.

© New preface, Dec. 1993, in *Bukkyō no Chūgoku Denrai* 仏教の中国伝来 (Tokyo: Serika shobō せりか書房, 1995): 9–16.

NEW PREFACE TO *THE BUDDHIST CONQUEST OF CHINA*

Reading this book more than thirty-five years after its publication has been a somewhat frustrating experience for the author; it probably is the best way to realize how much has been written in the meantime about almost all aspects covered by it, and how much new information should be integrated into a revised version. Of course the production of a Japanese translation would ideally have been the opportunity to do so, but the task of updating *The Buddhist Conquest* would have been so exacting and time-consuming, that the publication of this Japanese version would have been delayed by several years. Therefore the book has been translated as it stands, merely adding this introduction.

Needless to say that even a lengthy introduction would not suffice to present a survey of the relevant studies written by scholars in east and west in the course of the last decades. Its main purpose is to identify certain important lacunae, and to indicate how these gaps would be filled up in a hypothetical revised edition. In doing so I shall have to stress a few items on which I have done some research, and so I may excuse myself for referring primarily to articles of my own which I have published, or that are now in the course of publication. This will at least give the reader an idea of the way in which I would treat some topics that I now consider underexposed, or modify statements made in the text.

The book was intended to treat "the formative period" of Chinese Buddhism, starting in the first century CE, and with the first decades of the fifth century as its lower limit. Like all schemes of periodization, this definition is debatable, especially in the case of the early medieval period, when Buddhism simultaneously developed in the different states in north and south China. As a result, the lower limit of the period is not uniform for the different centres. In the *guanzhong* 關中 area—the ancient metropolitan region of Chang'an—the period is concluded with the many-sided activities of Dao'an in the years 379–385 CE, under the patronage of the ruler of the Former Qin, because at that time a state of maturity was reached in terms of religious ideas, monastic organization, and translation work. For that reason the activities of Kumārajīva and his school at Chang'an in the first decade of the fifth century have only been summarily

treated, for in spite of the momentous importance of Kumārajīva and his Chinese disciples, they could build upon the foundation already laid by Dao'an and his imperial patron. For central China, the lower limit had to coincide with the passing away of Huiyuan (416 CE), under whose leadership the community on Mt. Lu had become the most flourishing centre of both monastic and lay (elite) Buddhism. In that context, some attention still had to be paid to the contacts with Kumārajīva and other masters at Chang'an. Finally, in view of the very close connections between Buddhism in the Lower Yangzi region and the court at present-day Nanjing, it seemed logical to let the lower limit for that region coincide with the fall of the Eastern Qin dynasty in 420 CE.

However, it should be quite clear that all these arguments for the periodization adopted here are based upon a plainly 'elitist' approach to early Chinese Buddhism: the development of Buddhism in its formative phase is described in terms of (on the religious side) prominent masters and well-known translators, and (on the lay side) the reactions, both positive and negative, of a tiny elite of rulers, courtiers and scholar-officials.

This approach has been unavoidable because of the extremely one-sided nature of our source materials, all of which have been written by literati and by members of the small emerging elite of scholar-monks within the *saṅgha*. In general they were interested in what happened on that level, with a well-defined range of interests: the relations between the *saṅgha* and the highest strata of society; the production and exegesis of written texts, and the interpretation of Buddhism for a highly educated Chinese public. As I have argued at several occasions,[1] we are dealing with the tip of an iceberg, about which we are reasonably well-informed, and we know next to nothing about the submerged body which may have been a thousand times larger, and in some ways more interesting.

Every bit of information which we can get, directly or indirectly, is therefore precious, and they should have been given more attention in the book. In order to get at least some glimpses of how Buddhism developed on the middle-class and popular levels, I would suggest the following five lines of inquiry:

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[1] E.g., in "Perspectives in the Study of Chinese Buddhism." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1982: 161–176.

1. A closer study of those incidental remarks and stray passages (notably in Buddhist biographical literature) about popular beliefs and practices;
2. An analysis of the mass of (mostly short, and often primitive) "anonymous scriptures" in the Buddhist canon, and of the few fragments that have survived of the earliest Chinese apocrypha;
3. Buddhist elements in early non-Buddhist sources, notably miracle stories of the *zhiguai* 志怪 type;
4. Buddhist elements in representational art and material culture, and
5. Buddhist themes, ideas and beliefs that since the late third century have been absorbed into religious Daoism, as shown by early Daoist scriptures, especially of the *lingbao* 靈寶 type.

Whatever information those soundings will yield will be no more than small samples—fragments from the submerged body, taken to the surface by deep drilling. But it is all we can expect to get, and in any case it is imperative that in our approach to early Chinese Buddhism we are constantly aware of the fact that we know next to nothing about at least ninety percent of the total complex.

If we turn to what may be called the "embryonic phase" the Later Han and Three Kingdoms period—somewhat more is known about the absorption of Buddhism into Chinese culture, thanks to the findings of archaeology.

When the book was written, our knowledge about the incipient Buddhism of the first and second centuries CE was virtually restricted to two areas: (a) hybrid court Buddhism, and (b) the Buddhist community at Luoyang starting with the arrival of the Parthian An Shigao 安世高 in 148 CE. The first one is attested since 65 CE (or, if we include a tradition of doubtful historical value, even since 2 BCE); it involves the lay devotion of an imperial prince; the cult of the Buddha at the court in Luoyang; probably the cult of relics, and possibly also the production of the "Sūtra in 42 Sections" (*Sishierzhang jing* 四十二章經). The activities reported all are associated with the court, and appear to constitute a mixture of Buddhism and Huang-Lao 黃老 Daoism. The second one clearly relates to organized monastic Buddhism with foreign monks and both foreign and Chinese lay believers; practically all we know about it is related to the translation of scriptures, some thirty of which have been preserved.

In the early 'sixties, material relics of Han and Sanguo Buddhism still were extremely rare, but since then archaeological field-work and research

have yielded a considerable amount of new artefacts and information.[2] The interesting thing is that they belong to an area of Buddhist influence of which very little was known, *viz*, the incorporation of isolated Buddhist elements into indigenous local cults. The Buddhist themes have been taken out of their original context, and have merged with elements belonging to Chinese religious lore, the white elephant being associated with traditional Chinese mythological animals, and the Buddha and other Buddhist superhuman beings being paired with Chinese gods like Xiwangmu 西王母, Dongwang gong 東王公 and the Lord of the Eastern Sea (Donghai jun 東海君). It would be wrong to regard these hybrid cults as belonging to "popular religion", for most of the representations have been found in the kind of tombs that only the well-to-do could afford; on the other hand, they have been found at places far from the metropolitan region (Helingeer 和林格爾 in Inner Mongolia; Sichuan; Shandong and northern Jiangsu). We apparently are dealing with local elites who incorporated isolated Buddhist elements into their world-view. Somewhat later, the same kind of hybridization is found in the Yangzi basin, where Buddhist religious images figure in a context of Chinese divine beings, as represented on third-century bronze mirrors and mortuary urns. The same holds good for the much debated rock carvings at Kongwang shan 孔望山 (N. Jiangsu), where unmistakably Buddhist images are found in a Chinese (notably Daoist) *repertoire*.

Thus the archaeological record has started to reveal at least the contours of a process of amalgamation and incorporation that must have gone on for centuries, in all parts of China, below the level of the events and processes described in the *Buddhist Conquest*. It is to be hoped that further discoveries gradually will fill that lacuna.

Another possible way to learn something about "Buddhism at sub-elite level" could be opened up by the systematic study and analysis of "obscure texts": short and sometimes rather primitive scriptures, that are classed as "anonymous" (*shiyi* 失譯), i.e. not produced by the more prestigious translators whose names have been preserved in biographical and bibliographical sources. It is a striking fact that the most authoritative scriptures, such as the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Prajñāpāramitā* in its various recensions, the *Vimalakirtīnirdeśa* and the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, all have been produced by

[2] "Han Buddhism and the Western Regions." In W. L. Idema and E. Zürcher, eds., *Thought and Law in Qin and Han China: Studies Dedicated to Anthony Hulsewé on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*. Sinica Leidensia 24 (Leiden: E.J. Brill): 158–182.

well-known foreign masters and their Chinese assistants, like Lokakṣema, Zhi Qian, Dharmarakṣa and Kumārajīva. We can think of several reasons why the production of such "classics" belonged to the sphere of high-class Buddhism. By their content they appealed more to a sophisticated audience, eager to integrate the basic ideas of Mahāyāna metaphysics into their own *xuanxue* 玄學 speculations. And, at a more down-to-earth level, the production of such large works was a complicated affair. Any obscure monk could produce a short popular text of a thousand characters, provided he found a bilingual assistant. But the translation of an extensive text like the *Lotus Sūtra* was a project that required team-work, organization, and well-to-do sponsorship.

The results of a little piece of research[3]—the analysis of the contents of 17 very early "anonymous scriptures", all of which are already listed by Dao'an in his catalogue of 374 CE—have been encouraging: it appears that this type of materials can teach us something about the range of interests and beliefs of third- and early fourth-century "middle class lay Buddhism". At this level, we are far removed from the sophisticated "philosophy of negation" of the Śūnyavāda School and from the poetic imagery of the Lotus Sūtra. Whatever remains of Dao'an's anonymous translations (a mere 17 out of 142) suggests a very concrete kind of Buddhist doctrine, centred upon a few basic ideas: human life as beset by danger and suffering; karmic retribution as the explanation of specific tribulations; the progressive moral degeneration of mankind (and of the *saṅgha* in particular), and the supernatural powers of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Further research along this line could yield more information about this down-to-earth, rather unsophisticated lay Buddhism, and the results of those enquiries would certainly have to find their place in a hypothetical updated version of the *Buddhist Conquest*.

It was no doubt also that kind of vulgarized Buddhism that from the late fourth century onward made its influence felt in the scriptures and rituals of its greatest rival, Religious Daoism, as well as in the messianic doctrines of sectarian religious movements. The latter phenomenon is hardly attested before the fifth century CE, and therefore would fall outside the scope of the book.[4] However, Buddhist influence on early reli-

[3] "Obscure Texts on Favourite Topics: Dao'an's anonymous scriptures." In Helwig Schmitt-Glintzner, ed., *Das andere China: Festschrift für Wolfgang Bauer zum 65. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz): 161–181.

[4] Cf. "'Prince Moonlight': Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism." *T'oung Pao* 67: 1–75.

gious Daoism has proved to be a major source of information, not only as regards Daoism, but also in reference to Buddhism. In the book as it stands the only case that is treated in detail is the *huahu* 化胡 controversy; the more general subject of Buddho-Daoist interaction would certainly require an additional chapter. A preliminary analysis of the scriptural evidence[5] has shown that, apart from numerous terminological borrowings, religious Daoism has incorporated some basic Mahāyāna notions such as concepts of space and time, karmic retribution, and the universalistic idea of "saving all beings", but that nevertheless the basic orientation of religious Daoism was not affected. Further research should tackle the question to what extent Buddhism in the Six Dynasties period has taken over elements from Daoist ritualism and demonology; it may well be that such borrowings will appear to be far more important than has been assumed so far.

In the book little attention has been paid to the "Buddha-word" in its most literal sense: the linguistic, terminological and stylistic aspects of translated Buddhist texts, particularly of the earliest phase, in which a characteristic Buddhist scriptural idiom was gradually taking shape. By an analysis of the language and style of the ca. 30 archaic texts that may safely be regarded as genuine Han translations[6] we can observe the first stage of that process, which was one of experimentation (for the first generations of foreign monks and their Chinese assistants had no existing model to follow). As a result, the archaic translations show a wide variety of linguistic usage and style, varying from semi-vernacular to almost pure literary Chinese, and from very primitive to rather "polished". Apart from the importance of those materials for the study of second- and third-century Chinese, the early translations also have yielded some interesting information about the intellectual and social context of the very first stage of Chinese Buddhism,[7] when it still was an obscure marginal religion, practised in a small mixed Sino-"barbarian" community in extramural Luoyang. The evidence suggests that these texts circulated among a public of Chinese lay devotees with rudimentary schooling, standing outside the elite of scholar-officials, but sufficiently literate to read these texts with

[5] "Buddhist Influence on Early Daoism: a survey of scriptural influence." *T'oung Pao* 66: 84–117.

[6] "Late Han Vernacular Elements in the Earliest Buddhist Translations." *Journal of Chinese Language Teachers Association* 12: 177–203.

[7] "A New Look at the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Texts." In Koichi Shinohara and Gregory Schopen, eds., *From Benares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion in Honour of Prof. Jan Yün-hua* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic): 277–304.

their plain style and limited vocabulary. In the context of the metropolitan culture of Late Han Luoyang we may think of a sub-elite of clerks and copyists: the lower fringe of the bureaucracy, and traders and artisans.

The evidence also indicates that in that early phase the fundamental distinction between monastic and lay Buddhism had not yet taken shape, as far as the Chinese believers were concerned: lay Buddhists engaging in *dhyāna* exercises that normally were only practised by monks. The further stage of the formation of the scriptural idiom are still to be studied. It is clear that in the early fifth century Kumārajīva and his translation team have made an essential contribution by creating a standardized scriptural style that was to remain exemplary for several centuries. But they built upon the basis laid by the translators of the late third and fourth centuries, notably on the translation idioms developed by Dharmarakṣa and his school, which constitutes a subject that still has to be investigated.

More attention should have been given to early Chinese Buddhism in a larger Asian perspective: what happened in China was, after all, the result not only of indigenous developments, but also of impulses coming from abroad.[8] Many foreign monks (of which the foreign masters mentioned by name in our sources only constitute a very small percentage) may have "drifted" into China by chance, but it cannot be denied that from the earliest times Buddhism has been a missionary religion *par excellence*, and that some foreign masters went to China (or were invited to come) with the express purpose of preaching the Doctrine in far-away Mahā-Cina. In addition, the spread of Buddhism from the Kushan territory and northern India, through the oasis states of Central Asia to China, also was the result of a mechanism of expansion that was inherent in the organization of the *saṅgha* itself. Whenever a local monastic community had grown in size beyond the limit that could be supported by local lay devotees, "surplus monks" had to move out, wandering away in search of suitable localities, travelling along the main trade routes to places where new *dānapati* could be found. All these factors combined to make China, situated at the end of both the continental and the maritime main routes, a promising mission field. In that respect two peculiar features of Chinese culture should have been highlighted. In the first place: the use of written Chinese as a universal system of communication, a standardized literary

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8 "Buddhism Across Boundaries: The Foreign Input." In *Buddhism across Boundaries—Chinese Buddhism and the Western Regions, Collection of Essays 1993*. Edited by John McRae and Jan Nattier (Taipei: Fo GuangShan Foundation): 1–59.

language understandable in any part of the empire, the unifying force of which was increased by the use of a script that transcended dialectical differences. This means that Buddhist texts, once translated into some kind of written Chinese, at once had a potential area of circulation that was unprecedented in the early history of Buddhism. And, secondly, it is very probable that the diffusion of Buddhism was facilitated by the use of paper as a cheap and mass-produced writing material—a factor that, in its own modest way, may have contributed to the production, reproduction and circulation of Buddhist texts.

Who were those foreign monks who came to this promising "field of merit" to propagate the Doctrine? Again, the documentary information is fragmentary and one-sided. For the whole Six Dynasties period we have the names—and in a number of cases also biographical data—of about 80 missionaries coming from a great variety of regions: western Central Asia (i.e. the Kushan territory); the Indian subcontinent; Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. If we consider the time factor, it becomes clear that the part played by certain regions of origin differed widely in successive periods. Very roughly we can distinguish four main phases of propagation, each of which appears to reflect distinct phases of political and cultural development outside China, in different centres of diffusion.

1. The earliest phase, till the late third century, is mainly characterized by the activity of Indo-Scythian (Yuezhi 月支), Parthian and Sogdian missionaries. This phase of western Central Asian dominance clearly coincides with the existence of the Kushan empire.
2. In the second period (ca. 270–ca. 380 CE) the oasis kingdoms along the Silk Road, notably Kucha and Khotan, come into the picture. It reflects the beginning of a flourishing monastic Buddhism that has started in the first half of the third century.
3. Around 380 CE there is a sudden influx of prominent missionaries from northern India and especially from Kashmir; this marks the beginning of a large-scale input that lasts till the middle of the fifth century. This clearly corresponds to the heyday of the Gupta rule in India.
4. Somewhat later than the time-span covered in the book there is the beginning of a modest input from various centres in continental and insular Southeast Asia (Funan 扶南, and probably also Java or Sumatra), since the middle of the fifth century—a by-product of the indianization of the coastal regions of Southeast Asia that was gaining momentum in the same period.

5. If the book would be rewritten, it would no doubt be necessary to include a chapter on the formative phases of Chinese Buddhism in their Asian context, incorporating all the information we have on the foreign missionaries, not only after their arrival in China, but also paying due attention to the cultural environment of their places of origin.

The earliest development of the female counterpart of the *bhikṣu-saṅgha*, the order of Buddhist nuns (*bhikṣuṇī-saṅgha*) has only received slight attention. It is true that around 420 CE the female order was still in its incipient stage (the regular ordination ceremonial for nuns was only made possible some fifteen years later by the arrival of two groups of nuns from Sri Lanka), but more should have been said—and much can be said—about the various roles played by the educated *bhikṣuṇī* as an ideal type, and the latter's relation to the deeply rooted ideals of female behaviour in Chinese society.[9]

Finally, in the book no attempt has been made to treat the introduction and acculturation of Buddhism in early medieval China in a comparative way, as one (and by far the most successful) case of the incorporation of a foreign religion into Chinese culture. A preliminary comparative analysis of two cases—Buddhism in its formative stage and Christianity as introduced by Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century[10] has yielded some facts that could find their place in a hypothetical concluding chapter in which the main processes and developments would be summarized.

There no doubt are other points that could be mentioned here, but an introduction of this kind should be limited in size and not expand into a new first chapter. I hope that what has been said above will serve the purpose, and that, when read in conjunction with the book that follows, it will do to the *Buddhist Conquest* what a restorative drug is supposed to do to an old person—to counteract, partially and never completely, the inevitable defects of old age.

9 "Religieuses et couvents dans l'ancien bouddhisme chinois." In *Bouddhisme, Christianisme et société chinoise* (Paris: Julliard): 43–94.

10 "Bouddhisme et christianisme." In E. Zürcher, *Bouddhisme, Christianisme et société chinoise* (Paris: Julliard): 11–42.

© Schmitt-Glintzner, Helwig, ed., *Das andere China* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1995): 161–181.

OBSCURE TEXTS ON FAVOURITE TOPICS. DAO'AN'S ANONYMOUS SCRIPTURES

When in 374 CE the Buddhist master Shi Dao'an 釋道安 (314–385 CE) completed the compilation of his "General Catalogue of Scriptures" (*Zongli zhongjing mulu* 總理衆經目錄), he probably was not aware of the fact that by doing so he was initiating the great tradition of works of Chinese Buddhist bibliography, and he certainly could not have realized that, many centuries later, scholars in east and west would treasure his work as the only extant guide to the earliest history of the textual transmission of Buddhism in China during its first phases, from the late Han to the early fourth century of our era.[1]

Dao'an must have spent many years collecting the ca. 600 texts listed in his catalogue. He probably found them at many different places. In his early years he had been one of the many disciples of the Kuchean master and thaumaturge Fotudeng 佛圖澄 (d. 349 CE) who had served the rulers of the Later Zhao (330–352) as a kind of court-chaplain and soothsayer at their capital Ye 鄴 (in southern Hebei). We have no reliable information about Dao'an's activities during that period, but for all we know the atmosphere at Ye was hardly conducive to scholarly activities. When in 349 the Later Zhao regime collapsed in chaos and bloodshed, Dao'an fled from the capital with a large group of followers, and for the next fifteen years (ca. 350–365 CE) they led an almost nomadic life, temporarily staying at at least eight different monasteries in central and northern China. He finally settled with his following of several hundreds of monks at Xiangyang 襄陽, in present-day northern Hubei, which due to his indefatigable activity developed into a major centre of Buddhism.[2] Dao'an was to stay at Xiang-

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[1] Biography of Dao'an in T 2145 *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集, j. 15, pp. 106a–107b, and T 2059 *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, j. 5, pp. 351[c]–354[a]; Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿, Shaku *Dōan kenkyū* 釋道安研究, Tokyo, 1956; Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, *Han Wei Liang-Jin Nanbei-chao fojiaoshi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史 (orig. ed. Shanghai, 1938), repr. Beijing, 1983, pp. 133–163; Arthur E. Link, "Biography of Shin Tao-an": *T'oung Pao* 46, 1958, pp. 1–48; E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, Leiden, 1992, pp. 184–204.

[2] Ui Hakuju 宇井伯寿 (see fn. 1 above), pp. 18–34; E. Zürcher (see fn. 1 above), pp. 187–198.

yang 襄陽 for fourteen years, until the city was taken by an army of the Former Qin, and Dao'an was taken to Chang'an as a venerable prize of war.

We know that during the years of peregrination Dao'an was already engaged in scriptural and philological studies, editing translated texts
[162] (especially those of the earliest period) and writing commentaries, and we may therefore assume that the work of systematically collecting texts had started already long before he settled at Xiangyang 襄陽. The content of his catalogue may therefore be taken to reflect the body of translated texts circulating in central and northern China around the middle of the fourth century CE—the accumulated deposit of the first two centuries of Buddhist translation activity on Chinese soil.

Dao'an's catalogue no more exists as an independent work. However, it was incorporated by Sengyou 僧祐 in his "Collected Notes on the Production of the [Chinese] *Tripiṭaka*" (*Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集, T. 2145; completed in 515 CE), and since Sengyou 僧祐 has taken care to distinguish clearly between Dao'an's text and his own additions, modern scholarship has been able to reconstruct the original work *in toto*.[3]

The *Zongli zhongjing mulu* was a work of independent and original research. Dao'an may have consulted some existing lists of titles of works translated by individual masters, but he did not just copy them; he had personally investigated every text mentioned in his bibliography. This has also somewhat restricted the coverage of titles. Thus, Dao'an certainly has not made use of the *Jing lun du lu* 經論都錄, a list that had been compiled by the scholar-monk Zhi Mindu 支愍度 in the Jiangnan region,[4] and as a result, Dao'an was not well-informed about Buddhist texts produced and circulating in the Yangzi basin and further to the south.

In Dao'an's catalogue three major categories of texts are distinguished: scriptures attributed to specific translators; anonymous translations, and "spurious texts" or apocrypha. In the first part, about 250 texts are listed under the names of 17 foreign translators; in many cases, the attribution must have been made on the basis of existing colophons, notes, and prefaces figuring in the manuscripts, but there also are instances where Dao'an appears to have used criteria of style and terminology. The second

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[3] Cf. Hayashiya Tomojirō, *Kyōroku kenkyū* 經錄研究, Tokyo, 1941, and Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定, *Gokan yori Sō Sei ni itaru yakkyō sōroku* 後漢より宋齊に至る譯經総錄 (reed.) Tokyo, 1974; reconstruction of Dao'an's catalogue in Tokiwa, ibid., pp. 160–181.

[4] For this catalogue, that had already been lost before 600 CE, see Hayashiya (see fn. 3 above), pp. 305–325, and, also by Hayashiya, the article "Shi Mindo-roku 支愍度錄" in Ono Genmyō 小野玄妙, *Bussho kaisetsu daijiten* 佛書解說大辭典, Tokyo, 1936, vol. 4, p. 168.

main part contains the titles of no less than 317 anonymous translated texts, divided into four categories: (1) "ancient variant [versions]" (*guyi* 古譯); (2) anonymous texts (*shiyi*); (3) "anonymous scriptures of the Liang region" (*Liangtu* 涼土, the northwestern border region, roughly
[163] corresponding to present-day Gansu), and (4) "anonymous texts from the Region Within the Pass" (*guanzhong* 關中, i.e. Chang'an, the ancient metropolitan area). Finally, the section dealing with "doubtful scriptures" contains the titles of 26 apocrypha, many with intriguing titles. Unfortunately, all those early products of pseudo-scriptural sinicization have been lost; only a few tantalizing lines have been preserved in early Buddhist compendia.

In this article we shall concentrate upon the texts listed in the second part of Dao'an's catalogue, and more specifically with the sub-category of "anonymous scriptures". In this section, Dao'an presents 142 titles, without any indication as to date or provenance. In length they range from two to one *juan*, but even the two-*juan* works are quite exceptional; more than 95% consisting of short texts of only one "roll". This is confirmed when we look at what remains of that body of early anonymous scriptures—a pitiful residue of 17 texts that still can be found in the Taishō canon. It is a body of scriptural materials that is very heterogeneous as regards their formal characteristics. Some texts may well date back to the late Han, as is shown by their primitive style; by the use of a semi-*wenyan* interspersed with colloquial expressions, and by the quaint terminology. In other cases the language and style are close to those used by Dharmarakṣa (Zhu Fahu 竺法護), the most important translator of the late third and early fourth century, whereas some other texts are written in an impeccable *wenyan* reminiscent of the *jātakas* translated by Kang Senghui 康僧會 in Nanjing around the middle of the third century. Some texts have a regular *sūtra* form, whereas others are more like free compositions, lacking the standard opening and closing formulas. The only formal characteristic which those 17 texts have in common is that they are short to very short, varying in length from 240 to a mere 22 columns in the Taishō edition.

The choice of such a mixed body of materials as the subject of a paper needs a justification other than the fact that they have been classed as "anonymous" by Dao'an. The present paper is based upon the assertion that as regards content these texts exhibit certain common features and show a predilection for certain topics, to the exclusion of others, and that for that reason they may be regarded as a scriptural tradition belonging to a special type of early Chinese Buddhism. That assertion is in turn based

upon another observation, *viz.* that in the huge body of Buddhist texts translated into Chinese a distinction can be made between, on the one hand, a limited number of "prestigious scriptures"—seminal but often quite lengthy texts containing key religious ideas in an elaborated form, sometimes at a high level of sophistication—and, on the other hand, a huge mass of short texts, devoted to one or a few topics, less sophisticated, and more easily digestible.

If we, starting from that assumption, have another look at Dao'an's catalogue as a whole, a striking fact appears: all the "prestigious" major texts [164] are attributed to specific translators, the masters who may be regarded as the intermediaries in mainstream early Chinese Buddhism. To give a few examples: the late Han Lokakṣema is credited with three major *Mahāyāna.* texts: the *Prajñāpāramitā in 8,000 verses*; the *Śūraṃgama-samādhi-sūtra*, and the *Pratyutpannasamādhi-sūtra.* In the mid-third century, another prominent translator, Zhi Qian 支謙, made the first Chinese versions of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* and of the most sophisticated Mahāyāna scripture, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*; Vighna translated the *Dharmapada*; Mokṣala the *Larger Prajñāpāramitā*; Dharmarakṣa produced the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Lalita-vistara*, and several other major texts. None of those "classics" is found among the anonymous translations; the nearest equivalent which we find there consists of single chapters or condensed versions. One example figures among our 17 anonymous texts: T 265, which bears the impressive title of *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, but which in fact only consists of one chapter from the *Lotus Sūtra*, changed into an independent text by adding the conventional opening and closing phrases.

Whence this regular association of the most prestigious translated texts with known translators? To some extent it can be explained by the status of the known translators and the concrete conditions under which their texts were produced. As I have argued elsewhere,[5] the available biographical information is extremely fragmentary, *inter alia* because our main sources (notably the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 and the biographical chapters of the *Chu sanzang ji ji*) are largely works of Buddhist propaganda, intended to prove the respectability of the Buddhist church. As a result, they concentrate upon a tiny elite within the *saṅgha*, the most illustrious Masters of the Law and their high connections; and, as far as translation work is concerned, the prominent foreign monks who were active at major centres, often at the Imperial capital. It is only

[5] E. Zürcher, "Perspectives in the Study of Chinese Buddhism", in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1982, pp. 161–176.

natural that there was a relation between that elite within the clergy and the production of large, prestigious texts. With the help of a Chinese assistant almost any foreign monk could produce a short popular tract or scripture, but the translation of a voluminous text like the *Lotus Sūtra* was a considerable undertaking that required organization and sponsorship. And the very size of the product also contributed to the dichotomy, for we must keep in mind that in China (as elsewhere) before the invention of printing, books were rare and extremely expensive; few people could afford to commission such large manuscripts. At a more popular level the demand would rather be satisfied by short and simple texts, or by leaflets containing only a few dozen of lines. At that level such texts would also
[165] tend to be anonymous, simple in style, and appealing to the public by the selection of topics and the manner of presentation.

It is against that background that the body of still extant anonymous texts listed by Dao'an becomes significant. In their own modest way, they allow us some glimpses of what we may call "Buddhism at the sub-elite level" at a very early stage of its development.

In order to substantiate this claim, it will be useful to have a closer look at the content of each of our 17 scriptures. In the following survey the content of the texts will be summarized in the order in which they are found in the Taishō canon. The length of each text will be indicated by the number of columns in the Taishō edition, one full column containing 18 characters. In principle, an arrangement of their subject matter according to main topics would have been preferable, but since in some texts several different themes are combined, such a topical treatment would not be feasible. The survey will therefore be followed by a synthetic section devoted to the main themes.

(T 29) *Xianshui yu jing* 鹹水喻經; 1 *j.*; 41 columns.[6]
A parable about seven things that may happen to people when getting into a river: drowning right away; emerging and then drowning; saving one's skin for the time being; or permanently; striving

[6] "The Scripture of the Simile of Salt Water" ("salt", referring to sea water, appears to be a mistake; the other versions, both Chinese and Pāli, only speak about "water"). A separate version of the scripture is also found in Gautama Saṅghadeva's integral translation of the *Ekottarāgama* (T 125, *Zengyi ahan*), j. 33, section 39, nr. 3 (pp. 720b–730a); Pāli version, entitled *Udakupama-sutta*, in *Aṅguttara-nikāya* 7.15 (ed. E. Hardy, London, 1899, Part IV, pp. 11–13), trsl. in E. M. Hare, *The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, vol. IV, London, 1955, pp. 7–8.

to get to the other shore; reaching that shore; staying there forever. They are compared to a human being at seven stages of (im)perfection: the sinner; the repentant sinner; the firm believer; and the "four fruits of saintliness" culminating in the *arhat* who is forever free from desire.

(T 73) *Doutiao jing* 兜調經; 1 *j.*; 91 columns.[7] Two themes:

(a) The amusing story of a brahmin who because of his rude behaviour is reborn as the pet dog of his own son. When the Buddha
[166] visits his home and is barked at, he sternly reminds the dog of the reason of his present state. The son comes home and finds his dog listless and weeping. Indignantly he goes to the Buddha, who tells him that the dog is his father: in order to verify this the dog is asked to identify the spot where he in his former life has hidden a treasure. So he does; the son is happy and becomes a devout Buddhist.

(b) When asked by the son about the workings of karmic retribution, the Buddha explains why some people are long-lived, healthy, rich, etc., and others are short-lived, sick, ugly, etc. It all depends on conscious choices made: everybody reaps what he has sown.

(T 96) *Zhi yi jing* 治意經; 1 *j.*; 22 columns.[8]

A very short tract about the salutary effects of breath control (*ānāpāna*) as a first step towards Release. Directions for nocturnal meditation exercises focusing upon the Buddha, the Doctrine, the Order, and the Six Perfections (*pāramitā*). A very archaic text, probably dating from the Later Han.

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7 "The Scripture of Doutiao (= Pali "Todeyya"); somewhat condensed separate version of the Scripture also found in the *Madhyamāgama (Zhong ahan* 中阿含*)*. T 26, j. 44, nr. 170 (pp. 703c–706b); Pāli version in *Majjhima-nikāya* 135 (*Cūḷa-kammavibhaṅga-sutta*). ed. R. Chalmers, vol. II, London, 1898, pp. 202–207; trsl. R. Chalmers, *Further Diaologues of the Buddha*, vol. III, pp. 248–253 (containing only the second part of the story, dealing with various forms of karmic retribution).

8 "The Scripture on Regulating One's Thought" (here specifically referring to *ānāpāna* respiration exercise, also called *anban shou yi* 安般守意); the text appears to be an independent treatise (simply introduced by "The Buddha said . . ."), not based upon the prototype of the Pali *Ānāpāna-sati-sutta* (*Majjhima-nikāya* 115), nor on any of the short *sūtras* on breath exercise in the *Samyuktāgama* (T 29 *Za ahan* 雜阿含 j. 29, nrs. 801–812; pp. 205c–208c). In style and terminology it closely resembles T 795, significantly called "The Scripture on Regulating One's Body", *Zhi shen jing* 治身經; cf. below, note 19.

(T 147) [*Shewei guo*] *wang shimeng jing* [舍衛國]王十夢經; 1 *j.*; 64 columns.[9]

King Prasenajit of Śrāvastī has ten strange dreams, that are explained by his brahmin court astronomer as referring to impending disasters that will bring ruin to himself and his state. On the advice of his queen, the King consults the Buddha. The Buddha tells him that he can rest assured, since those disasters will only take place in the distant future; he then describes those future disasters, such as the rich being indifferent to the fate of the poor and the lonely; high officials exploiting the people; people ageing
[167] prematurely; female misbehaviour; the rich becoming poor and the poor rich; no respect for old people, etc.

(T 161) *Changshou wang jing* 長壽王經; 1 *j.*; 169 columns.[10]

A well-known *jātaka.* A virtuous king is attacked by his vicious neighbour; he flees from the capital, but he allows a poor brahmin to deliver him to the new king (for a reward), whereupon the latter has him burnt alive in public. The good king's son sees his father just before the latter's execution; the father beseeches the prince not to feel any hatred towards his killer. After some time the prince succeeds in entering the palace as a cook; he wins the usurper's confidence, and they become so close that they go hunting together in a wild and desolate region. The son sees to it that they lose their way. After two days the king is exhausted; he hands his sword over the prince and falls asleep. Three times the prince is about to kill his father's murderer, but every time he reminds

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[9] "The Scripture on the Ten Dreams of the King of Śrāvastī", a separate and slightly condensed version of a scripture also found in the *Ekottarāgama (Zeng yi ahan* 增壹阿含*)*, T. 125, section 52, nr. 9 (pp. 829b–830b); no corresponding text in the Pali *Aṅguttaranikāya.* Another anonymous version, T 147, is very close to the *Ekottāragama* scripture. A fourth version, T 148, is attributed to the late fourth century translator Zhu Tanwulan 竺曇無蘭 (Dharmaratna?). The attribution is not made before the late fifth century and may be unreliable, but the style and terminology do indicate an early date.

[10] "The Scripture on King Long-life". In the Pali *jātaka* father and son are named Dighiti and Dighāvu (*Jātaka* V.3.1, *Dighiti-kosala-jātaka*, ed. V. Fausböll, vol. III, London, 1883, pp. 211–213; E. B. Cowell (ed.); H. T. Francis & R. A. Neil (trsl.), *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, vol. III, Cambridge, 1897, pp. 139–140. The story is also found in Kang Senghui's mid-third century *jātaka* collection *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經, T 152, j. 1, nr. 10 (pp. 5a–6a); cf. Éd. Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et apologues*, vol. I, Paris, 1910, pp. 38–45. In the Korean recension (reproduced in the Taishō canon) the text is followed by a hymn in praise of the Buddha, which bears no relation to the *jātaka* text.

himself of his father's words, and stops. After the third time he throws the sword away, and when the king wakes up he reveals his identity. The king feels bitter remorse, and withdraws from the occupied territory. The usual *jātaka* conclusion: in a previous life the Buddha was the virtuous king; Ānanda was the crown prince, and Devadatta (the Judas Iskarioth of Buddhism) was the evil king.

(T 265) *Satan fentuoli jing* 薩曇芬陀利經; 1 *j.*; 90 columns.[11] An archaic, condensed version of one chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* (ch. 11: *Stūpa-saṃdarśaṇa*), containing three episodes:

(a) The miraculous apparition of jewelled *stūpa* provided with a "lecture hall", in which a previous Buddha, called Duobao fo, is sitting on a couch. He praises the *Lotus Sūtra*, after which
[168] Śākyamuni Buddha sits down at his side; together they recite the scripture.

(b) Śākyamuni tells how in a former existence he has toiled as a slave serving a brahmin mater, as a result of which he obtained the *Lotus Sūtra*. The "bad disciple" Devadatta was that brahmin; due to the merit gained by him in that previous life, Devadatta will achieve Buddhahood in the distant future.

(c) Mañjuśrī emerges from the ocean where he has been converting the *nāgas*; an eight year old *nāga* girl appears; she claims to be a very advanced Bodhisattva. When the disciple Śāriputra tells her that women cannot achieve that state, she transforms herself into a Buddha, to the amazement of the disciples.

(T 344) *Taizi Hexiu jing* 太子和休經; 1 *j.*; 84 columns.[12]
A series of 27 questions posed by the crown prince of Magadha, and the Buddha's answers. The questions refer to the karmic origins of the Bodhisattva's attainments (varying from longevity and domestic harmony to spiritual powers). The Buddha then predicts the future Buddhahood to be achieved by the crown prince

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[11] "Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Scripture"; a much condensed version of the *Stūpa-saṃdarśaṇa-parivarta*. The text contains three explicative glosses introduced by "In [the language of] Han this means ..." (*Han yan* ... 漢言 ...), but the style and terminology indicate a post-Han date; the editors of the Korean recension (reproduced in the Taishō canon) are probably right in assigning it to the Western Jin (265–316 CE).

[12] "The Scripture on Crown Prince Hexiu (- [Su]bāhu?)". A longer and rather different version is found in Bodhiruci's early 8th century *Ratnakūṭa*, T 310 *Da baoji jing* 大寶積經, section 37, j. 106, pp. 593a–594a; here the dialogue is in verse. A third version, T 343 *Taizi Shuahu jing* 太子刷護經, translated by Dharmarakṣa, is much closer to T 344.

as well as by his five hundred followers; their Buddha-lands will be as splendid as that of Amitābha. Whoever recites or listens to this scripture will be reborn in Amitābha's paradise.

(T 392) *Fo miedu hou guanlian zangsong jing* 佛滅度後棺歛葬送經; 1 *j.*; 75 columns.[13]

(a) Directions given by the Buddha to Ānanda concerning his cremation, building a *stūpa*, and storing his bodily relics in containers; salvation will be gained by all those who worship the relics.

(b) About the supernatural qualities of the Buddha's almsbowl, which after his decease will be magically transported to countries in the east. As in the far east a humane ruler is succeeded by a cruel king, the gods transport the almsbowl to the ocean, to be guarded by the *nāga*. The cruel king engages a wicked "counterfeit" Buddhist master who promises to recover the almsbowl, but
[169] he and all his bad followers are unable to do so. The king then sharply interrogates the impostor, and concludes that the Buddhist monks are misbehaving and constantly are sinning even against the basic five rules (of lay Buddhism: not killing, not stealing, etc.). The king thereupon severely persecutes the *saṅgha*; this will be the end of the Buddhist faith.

(T 521) *Fanmonan guowang jing* 梵摩難國王經; 1 *j.*; 31 columns.[14]

Very short text about the crown prince of king Brahmānanda entering the order. He soon becomes an *arhat*, but the king still wants to pamper him and provides him with delicious food from the royal kitchen. The Buddha orders the disciple to show his father the supernatural powers of an *arhat* (levitation, multiplication of the body, etc.); the king is deeply impressed and himself reaches the first stage of saintliness. The Buddha finally explains under what circumstances the mendicant monk is allowed to accept fine food and clothes.

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13 "The Scripture on the Coffin, the Collection (of the Relics), and the Funerary Rites after the Buddha's Total Extinction"; with the variant title *Biqiu Shi jing* 比丘師經, "Scripture on the Monk Shi" (Shi 師 being the transcribed name of the wicked Buddhist master mentioned in the text). It belongs to a type of short (and partly apocryphal) scriptures with "prophetic" content, supposed to have been spoken by the Buddha shortly or immediately before entering *Parinirvāṇa*.

14 "The Scripture on King (?) Mahānanda". The name of the crown prince is transcribed as Junlinru 均蕤儒, which looks like a rendering of Kauṇḍinya (= Ājñāta-Kauṇḍinya, one of the first and most prominent among the Buddha's disciples), but the story does not at all agree with traditional accounts of his family background and conversion.

(T 522) *Puda wang jing* 普達王經; 1 *j.*; 92 columns.[15]

A pious king pays homage to a wandering monk by touching the latter's feet with his head. His courtiers criticise him: the head is only used in paying homage to a king. The king orders them to get the heads of a human being, a cow, a horse, a pig and a sheep, and to sell these on the market. The last four easily find buyers, but no one, not even the poorest people, want to purchase a human head. After some time the human head starts decomposing and stinking, and the courtiers are at their wits' end. The king berates them: "So now you see what the head is worth!".

The king again meets the monk; the latter reveals to him that the king during his former life was the dedicated and virtuous boy-servant of his father; the boy had died very young, and as a karmic recompense he was reborn as his former master's eldest son and crown prince.

At the instigation of the wandering monk, the Buddha is invited by the king to visit his country; he is lavishly received by the king, and all his courtiers are converted.

[170] (T 629) *Fang bo jing* 放鉢經; 1 *j.*; 174 columns.[16]

In the presence of 200 gods who hesitate to enter the Bodhisattva career (and who consequently need to be fortified by a miracle), the Buddha throws his almsbowl away; it falls down through empty space and after having traversed an incredible distance it lands in another Buddha-world, where it remains suspended in the air. The Buddha of that region explains its apparition to his Bodhisattvas, and tells them about Śākyamuni-Buddha. After several disciples have in vain tried to recover the bowl, Mañjuśrī stretches his hand all the way to the other world and grasps the bowl. When the Bodhisattvas of that region are astonished by that miracle, their Buddha tells them at length about the evil conditions and suffering prevailing in Śākyamuni's Buddha-world (= our own world, called *Sahā*, "the Patient One"); Śākyamuni

[15] "The Scripture on King Puda (= Samantaprāpta?)". No other versions are known, and the reconstruction of the king's name is only conjectural.

[16] "The Scripture on Throwing [Down] the Almsbowl"; again a short episode from a larger scripture made into an independent text. Somewhat shorter versions of the same story are found in Lokakṣema's archaic (late Han) translation of the *Ajātaśatru-kaukṛtya-vinodana*, T 262 *Asheshi wang jing* 阿闍世王經, j. 2, pp. 392c–393c, and in Dharmarakṣa's translation of the same work, T 627 *(Wenshuzhili) puchao sanmei jing* 文殊支利普超三昧經, j. 2, pp. 411a–412b.

deserves special praise for being able to preach the Doctrine in such a dismal place. In the *Sahā*-world Bodhisattvas are suffering in all possible ways: they have to endure poverty, sickness, oppressive government, war, physical ugliness and disability, and being despised by their relatives. Sometimes they cannot find a wise teacher, or are too poor to afford one, etcetera. Śākyamuni then allows all the Bodhisattvas of the other world to come to Śrāvastī to worship him, and finally he tells a short *jātaka* story about Mañjuśrī and himself in a former life.

(T 687) *Xiaozi jing* 孝子經; 1 *j*.; 48 columns.[17]

The Buddha describes the parents' endless care and toil when they are bringing up their children; how to requite all this? He rejects the disciples' answer that parental care can be requited by providing them with material goods, however precious: true filial piety consists of making them true believers, doing one's utmost
[171] to make them commit no sins, so that they will enjoy harmony within their family, and be respected by the ruler, the authorities, and the people. The religious life is the only way to live happily in a world that is beset by all kinds of sin and disorder.

(T 740) *Eduoheduoqi jing* 額多和多耆經; 1 *j*.; 30 columns.[18]

A very short text in which the Buddha enumerates the various ways in which ignorant people misunderstand the importance or true significance of presenting gifts. They do so because they have a wrong perception of the world, which is a place of impermanence and suffering, but is considered by them as one of permanence and joy.

(T 795) *Zhi shen jing* 治身經; 1 *j*.; 23 columns.[19]

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[17] "The Scripture on Pious Sons". Very probably a Chinese apocryphal text—an interesting Buddhist elaboration of the Confucian idea that true filial piety implies much more than just taking care of one's parents' material well-being. For filial piety and Buddhist ethics, see Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism*, Princeton, 1973, pp. 15–55, and especially pp. 36–45 on Chinese apocrypha dealing with *xiao*, including this one.

[18] "*Eduoheduoqi jing* 額多和多耆經" is mentioned in the text itself as the title of the scripture revealed by the Buddha at that occasion; no other versions are known, and there is no clue as to its meaning (*eduo-heduo* might represent *artha-vāda* "right speech", but that is mere guesswork).

[19] "The Scripture on Regulating One's Body". In style and terminology this text (rather a fragment from a didactic treatise than a *sūtra*) closely resembles T 96, the "Scripture on Regulating One's Thought"; cf. above, note 8.

An even shorter text, written in an archaic style and very hard to understand. The essential message appears to be that in order to subdue others one has first to subdue oneself; in order to lead others to the disciplined religious life one has first to discipline oneself, etc.

(T 819) *Fa chang zhu jing* 法常住經; 1 *j.*; 26 columns.[20]
A very short but rather precise summary of the essential characteristics of the Three Vehicles: the Hīnayāna, the Pratyeka-Buddhayāna, and the Mahāyāna, as epitomized by the attainments of, respectively, the *arhat*, the "solitary Buddha" (Pratyeka-Buddha, who realizes Enlightenment but does not preach the Doctrine), and the Buddha. All three together constitute the single and eternal Doctrine, that remains the same whether there is a Buddha in the world or there is none.

(T 1262) *Guizi mu jing* 鬼子母經; 1 *j.*; 85 columns.[21]
The story of the conversion of the Hāritī, the "mother of demons", whose thousand sons, each with his own host of demons, used to terrorize the gods in the heavens and the people on earth,
[172] whereas she herself was roaming around and kidnapping children to be devoured by her. At the request of Ānanda the Buddha decides to put an end to it; he orders his disciples to abduct Hāritī's sons when she is hunting for her human prey, and to hide them in the *vihāra.* After more than ten days of seeking her children, Hāritī comes to the Buddha, weeping and wailing. The Buddha sternly rebukes her, after which she repents and accepts the Five Rules. Henceforward she will be a beneficial power, granting sons to women who pray to her; and her sons will turn into protective spirits and defenders of the faithful. A popular story told in a loose and lively, almost vernacular style.

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[20] "The Scripture of the Doctrine Subsisting Forever"; no other versions are known. Since it only contains a very summary explanation of a few key concepts of Buddhism, it appears to have been written for outsiders, as a kind of religious hand-out.

[21] "The Scripture on the Mother of Demons", containing the earliest account of her conversion into a protective *magna mater*, and the cult connected with her. Later versions of the same story are found in T 383 *Mahā-Māyā-sūtra* (*Mohemoye jing* 摩訶摩耶經, trsl. by Tanjing 曇景, ca. 500 CE; in verse), and much more elaborated in Yijing's 義淨 translation of a section of the *Mūla-sarvāstivāda-vinaya* (T 1451, early 9th century, section *Zashi* 雜事), pp. 360b–362c. For a very interesting tantric ritual using *mantras* revealed by Hāritī, see T 1260 *Da yaocha nü Huanxi mu bing aizi chengjiu fa* 大藥叉女歡喜母并愛子成就法, translated by Amoghavajra (Bukong 不空; mid-8th century).

(T 2029) *Fo shi biqiu Jianzhanyan shuo fa mojin jie bai ershi zhang* 佛使比丘迦旃延說法沒盡偈百二十章; 1 *j.*; 240 columns.[22]

A text entirely consisting of unrhymed verse (119 couplets of 4 × 5 syllables, concluded by one couplet of 4 × 6) in which the disciple Katyāyanīputra describes the moral degeneration of the *saṅgha* after the era of the True Doctrine (*zhengfa*): the monks will be ignorant and quarrelsome, engaging in endless disputes without having any profound knowledge of the scriptures; they will hate the few wise and virtuous monks who are still left, and try to get rid of them, and they will practise worldly occupations, rear families, and be fond of singing and dancing.

It would be naive to assume that the anonymous scriptures summarized above allow us to reconstruct, if only in outlines, the "sub-elite Buddhism" of the third and early fourth centuries. In the first place the bulk of the corpus listed by Dao'an no more exists: the 17 texts that still are extant constitute less than 13% of it. But even more important is the fact that (with the possible exception of T 687) we are dealing with sacred texts of foreign origin, products of a non-Chinese religious tradition, and that we have no way of knowing to what extent the many ideas, images and
[173] items they contain really were incorporated into the Chinese creed. In any case we should take care to avoid the philological fallacy (still especially rampant in Buddhist studies) that regards the history of a religion as the history of its texts; in fact, texts only are one element that play a part in the totality of beliefs, values, ways of behaviour, acts of devotion, bodily and mental exercises, rituals and prayers that constitute a living religion—and not necessarily the most essential one. For later periods we do have a certain amount of information—increasing with time—about those many other elements, but for this very early phase of Chinese Buddhism such information is minimal. As a result, we are unable to assess the actual impact of the content of each scripture in detail. What did the "brahmin"—a personage that occurs several times in our texts, in several

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[22] "The 120 Couplets of *Gāthā* About the Extinction of the Doctrine, Pronounced by the Monk Katyāyan[īputra] at the Instigation of the Buddha", a typical example of a group of texts devoted to the moral decay and final dissolution of the *saṅgha.* Some of these no doubt are Chinese apocrypha (cf. my "'Prince Moonlight'. Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism", *T'oung Pao* 68, 1982, pp. 1–75), but in this case there is no reason to doubt its Indian origin.

roles—mean to the Chinese audience? What meaning did references to "the 250 (monastic) rules" have at a time when no such corpus of rules was yet known in China, and monastic life still largely was a matter of pious improvisation?[23] Did such elements have a certain impact, or were they just accepted as parts of an exotic lore? Unfortunately we cannot separate the dead weight from the payload.

On the other hand, the materials do allow us to draw some conclusions of a more general nature, concerning basic ideas and orientations. Some ideas appear again and again, and the texts in which they figure would hardly be selected for translation if they would not appeal to Chinese believers. If, for instance, our texts repeatedly describe the moral degeneration of the *saṅgha* in a period of general moral decay, we may safely conclude (1) that the Chinese audience interpreted such statements as referring to their own time; (2) that the description of large-scale monastic abuse could hardly be taken at face value (for such conditions had not yet developed in third century China), but (3) that it still would appeal to the religious imagination, as a powerful image of chaos, war and suffering. In this way we may use these materials to recognize some features of the spiritual climate in which this type of Chinese Buddhism started to develop.

In the first place, it is obvious that here we are far removed from the sphere of scholastic speculation (such as the systematic classification of phenomena) as found in many scriptures and treatises, and from the ontological ideas as contained in the more sophisticated texts of the Doc-
[174] trine of Emptiness (the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures and its scholastic elaborations). The nearest approach to a systematic exposition of the doctrine is the "Scripture of the Permanence of the Doctrine" (T 819), but with its mere 26 columns of text this is no more than a kind of religious pamphlet in which a few basic principles are just touched upon. Another border case is the very obscure and probably very early tract on breath exercise (T 96), but here again the actual technique of *ānāpāna* respiration is not described at all, and the text concentrates on more practical subjects like

[23] Before the middle of the third century the Chinese were not yet acquainted with any written account of the Buddhist monastic discipline. According to the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (T 2059, j. 1, p. 324c), the ordination ceremony "simply consisted of accepting the tonsure", and Chinese monks "when performing the [ceremonies of] fasting and confession simply imitated the [non-Buddhist] sacrificial rites".

the nocturnal meditations about the Three Jewels and the Six Perfections. Even in this case it is clear that we are dealing with elementary texts produced for lay Buddhists.

Consequently, the basic ideas are presented in a simple, attractive, and sometimes anecdotal ways. The workings of *karman* and retribution are not described in more abstract terms, as a process of Causation, but "visualized" in very concrete situations. There is not the slightest reference to key scholastic topics like the non-existence of a permanent Ego or the twelvefold sequence of cause-and-effect. *Karman* is represented as concrete types of suffering (or well-being), related to specific types of bad or virtuous behaviour in past lives (T 73; T 344), as also is implicit in the popular *jātaka* stories (T 73; T 161; T 265b, T 522). The popular appeal of such texts was no doubt reinforced by the fact that some episodes read like amusing anecdotes. The story about the aggressive brahmin being reborn as his own son's pampered pet dog, who is made to prove the working of *karman* by digging up the treasure he has buried in his former life (T 73) is told with humour, and so is the episode of the courtiers desperately trying to sell a human head on the market (T 522)—it just appears to be an enlivening anecdote not closely related to the main plot.

However, the central message of our texts hardly can be called amusing: the world is a bad place; it is a world of sin, corruption and suffering. This pessimistic attitude towards existence (at all levels, including the human sphere) is of course a fundamental assumption in Buddhism, and detailed descriptions of human misery are not rare. However, the frequency with which they occur in our small corpus of texts is well above the average, and that may be significant. One of the main reasons why this kind of elementary lay Buddhism was able to take root in China between the late Han and the middle of the fourth century may well have been that it appealed to—and reinforced—a general idea of *vanitas mundi*, an acute awareness of suffering and instability.

But Buddhism did more than that: it also was the only available doctrine that offered a clear and consistent explanation of human suffering, oppressive government and social inequality, by assigning a central role to rebirth and retribution. It could make clear why "the Bodhisattvas" (a term that in early texts sometimes simply means "the devout lay believer")
[175] so often are the victims of all those scourges, in spite of their good behaviour. Confucianism could explain why sinners suffer for evil committed in this life, but in the case of seemingly undeserved hardships it could only refer to "fate". Daoism only could offer the concept of "hereditary

sin", good people suffering because they are burdened by the misdeeds committed by their ancestors. Buddhism offered an explanation of the *condition humaine* that, within the terms of its own system, was clear, logical and consistent.

In that respect T 629 contains a key passage. It describes the sufferings that "Bodhisattvas" have to undergo in our sinful *Sahā*-world. When the question is asked why Bodhisattvas are living in such a bad world-system, the extraterrestrial Buddha gives two explanations. First, they may have had close relations with Śākyamuni in successive lives, and therefore voluntarily share his fate. Secondly, it is "because the evil which they have [inherited from] former lives is not yet exhausted; therefore they are born in that evil world". And that second explanation is then elaborated at such length that it no doubt constitutes the basic message of that text—the reason why it was translated.

In the description our world actually is represented as a milder form of hell—a place of purification through suffering. Twelve conditions are listed, at regular intervals interrupted by the refrain: "and for that reason he will again eliminate the baleful evil [inherited from] former lives". The conditions of suffering are concrete and down-to-earth:

(1) Being born in a poor family.
(2) Disease.
(3) Sickness and death of parents, brothers, and wife and children.
(4) A terroristic government, that leads to abandoning one's father and mother, the loss of home and property, and fleeing from home.
(5) Destitution as a result of losing one's source of income.
(6) Foreign invasion and destructive war, leading to the sad fate of being a refugee.
(7) Being born among lowly people, both poor and ugly.
(8) Being crippled, blind or deaf, and for that reason being hated even by one's closest relatives.
(9) Yearning for being instructed in the true Doctrine without being able to find a good teacher.
(10) Knowing that there is a good teacher at a distant place, but being unable to go there for physical reasons (e.g. being a cripple), or for lack of funds, or because there are no companions.
(11) Being too stupid to understand the instruction given by a good teacher.
(12) Being too impatient to receive instruction, so that one abandons one's teacher and will be tortured by remorse afterwards.

[176] (13) Having frightful dreams in which the evil one (*yuanjia*, usually referring to Māra), appears, holding arms in pursuit—(refrain: "in this way one will again eliminate the baleful evil of former lives").

The concretization of the karmic process—specific sins leading to specific forms of retribution—is carried even further in T 78 (second part):

(1) Killing and cruelty lead, after a sojourn in hell, to rebirth as one who is short-lived.
(2) Armed fighting and terrorizing people lead, via Hell, to rebirth as an ailing person.
(3) Anger and irascibility lead, via Hell, to physical ugliness.
(4) Lack of filial piety and of respect towards elderly people lead, via Hell, to rebirth as a person who is hated by everybody.
(5) Haughtiness, arrogance, and lack of respect towards superiors lead, via Hell, to rebirth as a person of low status.
(6) Stinginess, and unwillingness to present gifts to poor people or to the *saṅgha*, lead, via Hell, to rebirth as a pauper.
(7) Unwillingness to accept instruction in the Doctrine leads, via Hell, to rebirth as a stupid and foolish person.

Here, again, life on earth is seen as a means to atone for one's residual sins—a kind of mitigated prolongation of infernal punishment. The world as a vale of tears and a place of expiation and affliction: the kind of world that was symbolized by the images seen by king Prasenajit in his ten frightening dreams, as set forth in T 147. Here the same picture (this time purely descriptive, without reference to karmic retribution) of cruelty and indifference towards the poor, even within one's own family or hamlet; officials enriching themselves; precocious youths that know no shame; married women having love affairs when their husbands are absent; the hierarchical order of high and lowly, rich and poor being reversed; mothers making money by prostituting their own daughters; rulers and high-placed people indulging in polygamy, and bloody warfare.

Considering the small size of our corpus of short anonymous translations, it is significant that such descriptions occur three times. The conception of human life as a scene of suffering and deprivation was of course to some extent shared by the Chinese Buddhist elite, but in typical high-class sources such as the biographies of eminent monks it does not play such a prominent role. The early church leaders and the sophisticated Buddhist lay believers of the fourth century appear to have been attracted

to Buddhism for other reasons: as a new and well-organized form of the "life in retirement" (*yinju* 隱居), or as an exotic brand of "Dark Learning" (*xuanxue* 玄學). Their ideal formulation of the Doctrine was not found in these humble texts, but in the theories about "Emptiness and Non-being"
[177] as found in the *Prajñāpāramitā*, or in the profound aphorisms of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*. For the non-elite lay Buddhists, the situation was quite different: for them, Buddhism was a simple, concrete guide, that made the tribulations of daily life understandable, or even acceptable.

Since we are primarily dealing with lay Buddhism, it is not amazing that in describing the activities of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and saintly disciples little attention is given to their metaphysical Insight: the texts emphasize the concrete manifestations of their miraculous powers. In fact, the appeal of Mahāyāna scriptures may largely have consisted in their profuse description of miracles. In our corpus, the reason why section 11 of the *Lotus Sūtra* (T 265) has been selected to be made into an independent scripture appears to be that it contains two striking, very concrete miraculous happenings: the appearance of the jewelled *stūpa* containing, alive and well, a Buddha of an incredibly distant past, and the equally intriguing scene of a young girl changing into a Buddha.

The story of T 521—King Brahmānanda sending his son titbits from the royal kitchen after the latter has become a monk—no doubt originally served to elucidate a specific monastic rule (*viz.* the four cases in which food of special quality may be accepted), but for the Chinese lay public the main theme rather was the arhat's "spiritual attainments" (*shentong* 神通) displayed by the arfaat before his father's eyes. In the same way, the first half of T 629 is devoted to me intergalactic journey of the Buddha's almsbowl and its fantastic recovery by Mañjuśrī, just as a considerable part of T 392 describes the movements of that bowl after the *Parinirvāṇa*—a theme that has become the subject of a whole body of legendary lore.

Buddhist lay morality basically consisted in accepting the triple vow of dedicating oneself to the Buddha, the Doctrine and the *saṅgha*; in observing the Five Precepts, and in fulfilling some religious duties such as fasting, and supporting the *saṅgha* by gifts. True to its character as a universal religion, all those rules are universal, not parochial—they are not bound to a restricted in-group such as the family or the lineage. Family obligations have to be fulfilled (the "honour thy father and thy mother" is an essential element of secular life), but they are not part of religious life *per se.* The conflict that arose between Buddhist and Confucian attitudes—notably the Confucian conviction that Filial Piety is a *sacred* duty—is illustrated

by T 687, "The Scripture of Filial Sons", in which the standard Buddhist counter-argument is elaborated: the best way to serve one's parents is to incite them to observe the Buddhist rules and thereby to guarantee their rebirth in heaven. The reasoning strikingly resembles the argument brought forward, more than a thousand years later, by Chinese Christian converts: the best way to serve your parents is to save their souls.

[178] A global analysis of our seventeen texts appears to corroborate the thesis that they reflect an early phase of Chinese lay Buddhism at sub-elite level, and that the content of these scriptures may indeed allow us a glimpse of "the other China"—a field of inquiry which forms the subject of this volume, and to which my old friend Wolfgang Bauer has made such important contributions.

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BUDDHIST ART IN MEDIEVAL CHINA: THE ECCLESIASTICAL VIEW

Introductory Remarks: The Artist and the Artisan

One of the most striking developments in the cultural history of early medieval China is the process of individualisation that took place in various spheres of artistic activity, roughly between the end of the second and the middle of the fourth century AD. It started in two fields directly related to the production of texts: lyrical poetry and calligraphy. Around 200 AD lyrical poetry (*shi* 詩) as a refined expression of individual emotions took shape in the works of the 'poets of the Jian'an 建安 era' (196–220 AD), and around the same time we hear about the first great calligraphers who developed the practice of writing from a clerical skill into a highly sophisticated art. In both cases the practice of these arts was limited to the highly educated elite, at which level they became individualized and 'upgraded'. In this way a distinction developed between, on the one hand, the ongoing production of anonymous folk songs and the humble métier of clerks, and, on the other hand, the works of individual masters known by name and admired in *literati* circles.

Somewhat later—in any case already in the third century AD—something similar has happened in the field of painting. The historical records contain some bits of information about the earliest 'masters', many of whom also belonged to the small elite of courtiers, scholar-officials and members of leading families. In the fourth century the high art of painting had become so well-established that the first treatises about its theory and practice were composed, and soon afterwards we hear about the first private collections of painting and calligraphy. Here, again, a new type of artistic perception and appreciation had come into being: the great work of painting had come to be conceived of as the individual creation of a great master, an expression of his personal feelings in his own style. It was contrasted with the labour of the 'painting workmen' (*huagong* 畫工), the craftsmen who patiently went on decorating the walls of palaces, temples and tombs with their standardized and anonymous images. The dividing line between high art and artisanal production became sharp and clear: the learned treatises on painting written by connoisseurs are

almost exclusively devoted to the lives, characters, personal styles and works of famous masters, and hardly ever touch upon the products of artisan painting.

To some extent, the two levels differed from each other by their spheres of application (gentlemen-painters would never decorate tombs, as artisans did), and by the materials used (the most prestigious types of elite paintings being done on horizontal silk rolls). There also were distinctions in respect to subject matter, as elite painting covered a wider range of themes, often with a strong literary flavour, and there certainly were stylistic differences, the most important one being the use of calligraphic brushwork in elite painting.

Buddhist art came to cover both worlds, for right from the beginning *literati* painters occasionally devoted themselves to Buddhist subjects, and some of them owed their fame as much to the large-scale wall-paintings which they executed in Buddhist temples as to the more intimate works which they produced on silk. Thus, within the precinct of the large monastery high art and common craft coexisted, for Buddhist temples, monasteries and cave-shrines at the same time perpetuated the Indian and Central Asian tradition of cult images and wall-paintings executed by professional artisans.

There is no reason to suppose that aesthetic considerations did not play a role when the clerical authorities asked a famous master to paint a religious scene on a temple wall (or, in some rare but well-attested cases, to make cult images of bronze or stone); the invitation to do so may also have been prompted by more down-to-earth considerations such as the prestige of the monastery and the number of visitors who would be attracted by such masterpieces.

However, if we read the 'clerical record'—the many passages dealing with what we call 'Buddhist art' in specifically Buddhist sources—we are struck by the fact that in those sources the aesthetic element only plays a minimal role. To the learned monks who compiled such texts representations of Buddhas, bodhisattvas and other saintly figures were, first and foremost, religious icons with well-defined functions in worship, liturgy and meditation. Statues and painted icons were there to serve as objects of devotion; as concrete demonstrations of the donor's piety; as means to accumulate karmic merit for oneself and for others, and as aids in practising certain types of mental concentration; they also often were believed to be endowed with protective power and other supernatural qualities. Formal beauty is seldom stressed in the Buddhist sources, and virtually

no attention is paid to stylistic features such as brushwork, composition and colorite.

[2] If we shift our attention back from the ecclesiastical sphere[1] to the appreciation of Buddhist art as found in early works dealing with the high art of painting (they only occasionally touch upon other forms of Buddhist art such as sculpture and architecture), we are faced with a totally different perspective. Even the earliest treatises concentrate on 'personalities', their career and character, and the stylistic qualities of their works. In the case of Buddhist paintings very little attention is paid to their religious function or message. In the later more extensive works that were written in late Tang (notably Duan Chengshi 段成式's 'Notes on Monasteries and Pagodas', *Si ta ji* 寺塔記, and Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠's 'Notes on Famous Painters of Successive Dynasties', *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記, both of the mid-ninth century) we still do find some interest in the religious lore connected with certain icons that were believed to have 'supernatural efficacy' (*ling* 靈), but such stories are presented in a casual way, as interesting anecdotes. They are more than counterbalanced by 'pictorial folklore': anecdotes about the famous master's superb skill in wielding his brush, to such an extent that he could stimulate Nature to react, dragons coming alive on the silk, or birds hiding from a painted falcon. Buddhist icons are not placed in the context of the Buddhist world-view; instead, a terminology is used that is largely of Daoist inspiration. In other words, the early connoisseur approach to Buddhist art was almost exclusively secular and aestheticising. Before turning to the religious approach reflected by Buddhist sources it may be useful to describe its main features, by way of contrast.

The Secular Approach: Some Characteristic Features

In social terms, true art is and should be elitarian. This view is strongly expressed by the most prominent art critic of Tang times, Zhang Yanyuan:

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[1] The use of the term 'ecclesiastical' here refers to the fact that practically all our Chinese Buddhist sources (scriptural, disciplinary, historical, etc.) reflect the values and attitudes of a tiny elite within the *saṅgha*, the minority of cultured monks. They represent the great tradition within Chinese Buddhism, concentrated in the large and rich monasteries, and operating at a high level of institutionalization.

> Since ancient times excellent painters all have been robed and capped gentlemen, untrammelled scholars and men of noble character ..... [Painting] is not something that can be done by lowly people from the village lanes.[2]

In other words: both the ideal painter and his public belong to the elite of *literati*, and true painting is an integral part of high-class culture. Buddhist art is no exception: significantly, the very first Buddhist painting mentioned in connoisseur literature is a Buddhist image painted by the emperor Ming of the Jin dynasty (r. 323–326 AD).[3] The identification with *literati* interests is most clearly expressed by the close association of painting with calligraphy—a favourite topic of most authors. Already in the earliest treatises, the technical vocabulary used is largely derived from calligraphic ideals: virtuoso brushwork; 'vital energy'; structure; rhythm; natural freedom and spontaneity.

The true painter is not a patient labourer striving for realism, meticulous attention to detail, or the vulgar effect of gaudy colours. He avoids 'completeness in delineation and colouring, as well as the extreme carefulness in rendering details and a display of skill and finish'.[4] According to Huang Xiufu 黃修復, the painter of the highest class 'scorns the use of compass and ruler when making squares and circles, and he despises perfection in the use of colours; though the brush-work is simple, the form is complete'.[5] Artistic ideals that are far removed from the conventions of Buddhist art inherited from India and Central Asia—small wonder that the works of foreign artists are felt to be 'alien': '[The Indian painter Kauṇḍinyānanda] has no deep understanding of the Chinese canons [of painting]'[6] and 'since the Chinese and barbarian styles are different, there is no way to determine their rank [of quality].'[7]

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2 Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (mid-9th century), ed. *Zhongguo meishu zhuzuo congshu* 中國美術著作叢書, Beijing, 1963, j. 1, p. 15. Trsl. in Acker 1954, I, 153.

3 *Ib.*, j. 4, p. 107; Acker 1954, II, 24. For more information on this icon and the political commotion it caused somewhat later, see Zürcher 1959, I, 105–106.

4 *Ib.*, j. 2, pl. 26; trsl. Acker 1954, I, 185.

5 Huang Xiufu, *Yizhou minghua lu* 益州名畫録, 'Record of Famous Painters from Yizhou (the present Sichuan)', ca. 1000 CE, ed. *Zhongguo meishu lunzhu congshu* 中國美術論著叢書, Beijing, 1964; comment on the title *Yige* 逸格, 'the Untrammeled Class', on p. 1 of the Table of Contents.

6 Duan Chengshi, *Si ta ji* ('Notes on Monasteries and Pagodas', 2 j., originally j, 5 and 6 of his *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎, based on notes made by the author during his visit to the capital Chang'an in 843 CE), ed. *Zhongguo meishu lunzhu congshu*, Beijing, 1964, p. 1; referring to a mural made by the Indian monk in the capital's most prestigious temple, the Da Xingshan si 大興善寺.

7 Yao Zui 姚最, *Xu hua pin* 續畫品 ('Sequel to the Classification of Painters', mid-sixth century), trsl. Acker 1954, I, 57.

This externalized, aesthetic approach towards Buddhist art is enhanced by the fact that none of our authors appears to be even moderately acquainted with the Buddhist doctrine, and, consequently, with the actual significance of what is represented. Zhang Yanyuan refers to Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra as 'two *bodhisattvas*, one with a lion and one with an elephant' (Acker 1954, I, 314, n. 1), and mistakes the cobra on the head of a *nāga*-king for a lizard (Acker 1954, I, 330, n. 7). In general, Buddhist images are referred to in extremely vague and general terms: 'Demons and deities'; 'Elephants, horses and human figures'; '*bodhisattvas* and saintly monks'; 'Hell scenes'. The emphasis is not on the message but on the qualities of style and execution. One typical example may suffice to illustrate the extent to which purely aesthetic criteria dominate:

> [Paintings by Sun Wei, representing] the Heavenly Kings with their retinue, and a mixed crowd of men and demons, armed with halberds and spears, playing on drums and flutes. Criss-cross [all over the painting] they clash upon each other and are engaged in armed combat; [the scene is so realistic that] one can almost hear their voices. The animals such as falcons and dogs all have been executed in three to five brush-strokes, and [straight forms] such as taut bowstrings and axe-handles have been sketched by a single sweep of the brush, and yet they are as straight as if [the artist] had used a [ink-]cord. As regards the pine-trees, rocks and bamboos executed in [black] ink, the brushwork is refined and the use of the ink is marvellous, filled with a spirit of heroic strength, and [simply] undescribable.[8]

The emphasis on aesthetic qualities may also account for the selection of works of Buddhist art which we find in the secular sources, and which significantly differs from what we find in the ecclesiastical record. If we tabulate the Buddhist paintings mentioned by Zhang Yanyuan (as far as
[3] the subjects are indicated), the outcome is surprising: on a total of some 130 paintings, no less than 37 belong to the category 'Demons and Deities'; next come 'Eminent monks' (15), and the third place is occupied by *bodhisattvas* (9), whereas the fourth is shared *ex aequo* by 'Hell scenes', 'the Western Paradise', and, surprisingly, the god Indra. The most essential figures of the Mahāyāna pantheon only play a marginal role: Maitreya is mentioned four times, and Śākyamuni not at all. The reason for this curious distribution seems to be that secular connoisseurs like Zhang Yanyuan had a preference for dramatic scenes and realistic representations in which the artist could freely show his virtuosity and originality. It may

8 *Yizhou minghua lu* (cf. note 5 above), main text p. 1, s.v. Sun Wei 孫位.

be added that the secular orientation of these observers is also revealed by their selection of items that have no Buddhist iconic significance at all, and only served as ornamentary elements in the wall-paintings: pine-trees, rocks, flowers and birds, and landscapes, or that they single out some minor detail for aesthetic reasons: the splendid way the water is represented in a paradise scene, or the flowers in a bodhisattva's crown.

The clearest examples of this kind of aestheticisation are found in those cases in which secular art-lovers collected Buddhist wall-paintings, or parts of them, by having them moved from their original sites and 'stored' or 'mounted' elsewhere, for their own enjoyment. Normally this would be impossible without getting into conflict with the management of the large and rich monasteries who owned such masterpieces. We do hear about the transfer of wall-paintings (using techniques of removal and transportation that must have been quite sophisticated) also in normal times, at the order of the emperor or other high authorities who apparently could overrule the protests of the clerical establishment. However, the large-scale suppression of Buddhism of the years 843–845, that caused the destruction of almost all temples in the territory effectively under control of the Tang central government, gave the private collectors a chance. Amateurs (*haoshi* 好事) tried to save works of art by having them removed from the temples. The best known instance of such a salvage operation is the one undertaken by the minister Li Deyu 李德裕 (787–848 AD), who owned a temple situated on land that belonged to him (a common practice in late Tang times, and one that offered important fiscal advantages) near present-day Zhenjiang 鎮江 in Jiangsu. During the iconoclasm that virtually marked the end of the golden age of Buddhist wall-painting in China, he was able to transfer a great number of masterpieces from other temples to this sanctuary, where they survived (Zhang Yanyuan mentions fifteen masterpieces, among which the famous Vimalakīrti painted by Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 around 400 AD).[9] Such operations, however praiseworthy they may have been from the art-lover's point of view, of course had the effect of moving the icons out of their original context and treating them as 'museum pieces'. In the case of Li Deyu they still found their place in a privately owned temple. But even more telling is the story of the no less than eighty-two parts and fragments of Buddhist wall-paintings that during the same 'icono-

[9] *Li dai minghua ji* (cf. note 2 above); j. 3, pp. 71–73; trsl. Acker 1954, I, 366–377.

clasm of the Huichang era' were saved from destruction by a certain Hu Ju 胡據, a great art-lover of Chengdu, Sichuan:

> Thus he obtained thirty-seven human figures and eight horses, and from the Fusheng Shrine 福勝祠 he also got twenty-five human figures painted by Zhan Ziqian 展子虔, as well as twelve *apsaras* by Li Gantian 李感天, a painter of local renown, all of them remarkable works of spiritual transmission. He then had them set into the walls of his pavilion.[10]

Here the functional denaturation of the icons had become complete: the selection (in which images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas are signally absent) is made on purely aesthetic grounds, and the fragments are transferred to a pavilion in the garden of a country estate, just like so many cultic objects that in the West have been 'defunctionalised' by being moved from temples, churches and tombs to the sterile environment of the art museum. The parallel is even more striking when we read in the 11th-century 'Experiences in Painting' (*Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞志) how some people doubt whether *aficionados* should collect Buddhist and Daoist works of art, since they might be exposed to irreverence and defilement. Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛's answer is characteristic, and could have been given by any modern museum director: art-lovers are decent people who will respect the masterpieces of the past, and, moreover, the objects are kept clean and are taken good care of. He does not even see the basic problem involved.[11]

This paper is not about 'the secular approach' but about the way Buddhist art was *used* in its original environment. Nevertheless, I have allowed myself this digression into the secular world of amateurs and collectors in order to highlight the contrast between the two attitudes. The works written by art critics since the fifth century are of course of basic importance for the history of Chinese art and—even more so—for the history of art theory and artistic appreciation. But it is clear that they will not teach us anything about how Buddhist iconography functioned in its religious context. The authors did not know, nor did they care. For information about functional use we have to turn to stray references found in the ecclesiastical record.

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[10] *Hushi tinghua ji* 胡氏亭畫記 ('Note on the Paintings in the Pavilion of Mr. Hu') by Guo Yuan 郭圓, dated 845 CE, appended to Huang Xiufu's *Yizhou minghua lu* (cf. note 5 above), p. 66.

[11] Guo Ruoxu, *Tuhua jianwen zhi*, ed. Jigu ge 汲古閣, 1648, j. 1, pp. 15b–16a; trsl. Soper 1951, 18.

The Indian Background: Traditions and Disciplinary Rules

It is a notable fact that the canonical scriptures of Theravāda Buddhism—the *Sutta* and *Vinaya* sections of the Pāli canon—hardly contain any reference to the use of images. It would be wrong to regard this silence as a sign of its great antiquity proving that the Pāli scriptures and disciplinary rules reflect a 'pre-iconic' stage in which images did not play any role
[4] in Buddhist monastic life. It rather indicates that the type of Theravāda Buddhism that we find in the nuclear texts of the Pāli canon is, above all, a monastic system in which the typical activities of lay devotees only play a subordinate role. It reflects the idea that material acts of worship and the gathering of 'merit' leading to a happy rebirth belong to the sphere of pious lay devotion in which the monk is not directly involved.

But this is hardly relevant for our subject, because the Chinese were confronted with less exclusively monastic oriented versions of the Hīnayāna scriptures, in which more attention is paid to the production and use of images, whereas at the same time the steady influx of Mahāyāna texts informed the Chinese about the importance of icons in a different context. Thus the Chinese versions of the *Āgamas* (roughly corresponding to the *Nikāyas* in the Pāli canon), of the Disciplinary Rules (no less than five different versions of which were translated, belonging to different schools), and of a number of Mahāyāna scriptures contain references to images, their production, the materials used, the way they were placed inside the temple and monastery, and their use as objects of devotion and meditation. In some cases, the passages clearly refer to legendary traditions, notably in the case of the body of confused and self-contradictory lore that grew up around the theme of the 'first Buddha images'. Obviously, these legends have no historical value whatsoever, but in another sense they are highly important, since in China they became very productive, giving rise to typically Chinese variants and elaborations. Those stories about 'the sandalwood image of King Udyāna' and King Prasenajit's 'golden Buddha image' are basically different from our second class of materials, the stray references to iconographic matters found in the *Vinaya* rules.

At first sight, the *Vinaya*-type of information is down-to-earth and concrete: no miraculous events are reported, and the basic theme always is 'what is permissible, and what is to be prohibited' as regards the use and content of images. The fact that in the major sections of the *Vinaya* corpus each and every rule or prohibition is illustrated by 'case histories' (describing events that led to the formulation of a particular rule by the Buddha) adds to the impression of realism. However, we should keep in mind that

the *Vinaya* as a whole is a very artificial construction; that many case histories are extremely stereotyped and repetitive, and that the content is normative and prescriptive, not realistic and descriptive.

Our third category of materials of Indian origin is found in some Mahāyāna scriptures, ranging from major texts like the *Lotus Sūtra* and the earliest Chinese versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* to the obscure writings extolling the merits of image-making. In two respects the Mahāyāna represents radically different approaches. In the first place, some texts are closely related to the 'visualisation' of Buddhas and other saviours in meditation, a type of *samādhi* that came to play a very prominent role in Chinese Buddhism, both within the monastic community and among the laity. Religious icons representing a Buddha, mostly with his attendant bodhisattvas and situated in the gorgeous surroundings of his 'Buddha-land' (or, in the case of Maitreya, amidst the splendours of the Tuṣita heaven) came to function as visual supports for the 'commemoration of the Buddha' (*buddhānusmṛti*). Thus, a new function was given to the iconic representation, that hitherto had mainly served as an object of devotion and a source of 'good luck'.

But Mahāyāna never was a single, well-integrated doctrine. It owed its origin to a combination of some widely different and sometimes even contradictory ideas and beliefs, and in particular the devotional trend (the belief in, and worship of, powerful saviours like Amitābha, Maitreya and the major bodhisattvas) could hardly be reconciled with the equally important philosophical trend: the doctrine of universal unreality ('Emptiness', *śūnyatā*) of all mental constructs, even including the concepts of Buddha, retribution and release. Since the true Buddha-nature is beyond all imagination, no image can ever do justice to it. Icons are, in the last analysis, as useless as anything else as a means to reach the Absolute, for ultimate truth can only be approached by rejecting all images, both mental and material. As we shall see, some Mahāyāna texts contain interesting attempts to bridge the gap between devotional iconolatry and philosophical iconoclasm.

Traditions: The 'Two First Buddha, Images'

The most famous theme in the scriptural sources dealing with iconography is the story about the sandalwood image of the Buddha made at Kauśāmbī at the order of King Udyāna. The *locus classicus* is found in the Chinese version of the *Ekottarāgama* translated in the late fourth century AD by Gautama Saṅghadeva. It tells how the Buddha spent some time in the heaven of the Trāyastriṁśa gods in order to preach the Doctrine

to his mother who had been reborn there. As king Udyāna was stricken with grief at the Master's absence, his ministers advised him to have a Buddha image made in order to worship him *in effigie.* Udyāna thereupon summoned the most excellent master-craftsmen (*shijiang* 師匠) to his court, and ordered them to make a statue of 'ox-head sandalwood' (*niutou* 牛頭, *gośīrṣa*), seven feet tall. At that time another royal devotee, king Prasenajit of Śrāvastī, emulated Udyāna's act of piety by having a Buddha statue made of pure gold, five feet tall: 'Those were the first two Buddha images ever made in the continent of Jambudvīpa'.[12]

The text goes on to describe how after the Buddha's descent Udyāna presented himself before him with his sandalwood statue and asked him how much karmic merit would result from making a Buddha image. The
[5] Buddha, speaking in verse (*gāthā*), then enumerates the happy consequences of making Buddha icons: the devotee's eyes will be perfect, and in future lives he will obtain the power of Divine Vision (*tianyan shi* 天眼視, *divyacakṣus*); he will be strong and healthy in body and mind; he will be born in higher spheres of existence, and rule in the heavens as a king of gods.

The theme of happy retribution is further elaborated in a text that has been preserved in three Chinese versions;[13] the earliest one (T 692) is written in an archaic style characteristic of the fourth or even third century AD. All versions show Mahāyāna influence (in fact, at the end king Udyāna and all his ministers are said to have been 'reborn into the Buddhaland of Amitābha;) whereas the third version (T 694) is an extensive, purely Mahāyāna elaboration of the same theme. It is a rather late translation (ca. 690 AD), in which the story has been further mythologised by having the sandalwood image made by the divine artisan Viśvakarman. On the other hand, it is more concrete in its description of the various materials to be used in iconic representation: paintings made in various colours; metal statues cast in gold, silver, bronze, iron, lead and tin;

[12] T 125 *Zeng yi ahan jing* 增壹阿含經, j. 28, p. 706a and 708a–b. The Udyāna story is also summarised in the anonymous translation of a Mahāyāna scripture, T 156 *Da fangbian fo bao en jing* 大方便佛報恩經, which would predate the *Ekottarāgama* passage by some two centuries if the tentative date ('Later Han') assigned to it by the *Taishō* editors were correct. Unfortunately, on account of the terminology it uses the text cannot be older than the early fifth century CE.

[13] (1) T 692 *Zuo fo xingxiang jing* 作佛形像經, anonymous. (2) T 693 *Zaoli xingxiang fubao jing* 造立形象福報經, anonymous, 5th–6th centuries CE; a 'polished' and somewhat expanded version of T 692. (3) T 694 *Dacheng zaoxiang gongde jing*大乘造像功德經, 2 j., trsl. by 'Tiyunbanruo 提雲般若' (Devendraprajña?), a Khotanese monk active at Luoyang from 689 to 691 CE.

carvings in sandalwood; images executed with pearls, mother-of-pearl, embroidery and woven textile; and figures made of terra-cotta, gypsum, clay and wood.[14]

A curious further development of the legend is found in an extensive Mahāyāna text of the 'visualisation' type, the 'Scripture of the Sea of *Samādhi* of Visualising the Buddha',[15] translated by Buddhabhadra in the early fifth century. Udyāna's Buddha statue, which here is said to consist of gold, is endowed with locomotion. After the Buddha's descent it walks towards the Buddha and respectfully greets him. The Buddha returns the greeting and addresses his golden replica with prophetic words: 'In future ages you will perform Buddha-works on a grand scale. After my Nirvāṇa my disciples will charge you to do so', after which crowds of magically created Buddhas sing the praise of believers who after the Buddha's Extinction will produce images and worship them with banners, flowers and incense: in future lives they surely will master the pure *samādhi* of the Commemoration of the Buddha (*nian fo sanmei* 念佛三昧, *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*).[16]

The allusion made to the great deeds that will be performed by Udyāna's Buddha image is very interesting, because it no doubt refers to the legendary lore that had grown up around that sacred object. During his visit to Kauśāmbī the famous pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 was shown what was supposed to be Udyāna's original sandalwood Buddha image,[17] but elsewhere he reports the existence of the king's Buddha statue (said to be twenty feet tall, instead of seven) at Bhima near Khotan.[18] However, for the Chinese public the prophecy had acquired a special significance at least since the late fifth century, when it became associated with the legendary account of the introduction of Buddhism into China around 65 AD (see below).

The story of king Prasenajit following Udyāna's example and making his own golden Buddha image may reflect a rivalry between monastic centres at Kauśāmbī and Śrāvastī; from the Chinese pilgrims' accounts it is quite evident that the possession of such relics was publicised by their owners, since they attracted pilgrims and thereby increased the temple's prestige and income. The fame of Prasenajit's Buddha image obviously

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[14] T 694, j. 2, p. 793b.

[15] T 643, *Guan fo sanmei hai jing* 觀佛三昧海經, 10 j., trsl. by Buddhabhadra from 'Central India', who was active at Chang'an from 408 to 429 CE.

[16] T 643. j. 6, p. 678b.

[17] T 2087, *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記, by Xuanzang (602–664 CE), edited by Bianji 辯機, mid–7th century; j. 5, p. 898a; trsl. Beal 1906 I, 235; trsl. Watters 1904, I, 368–369.

[18] T 2087 (see preceding note), j. 12, p. 945b, trsl. Beal 1906, I, 322–323; trsl. Watters 1904, II, 298. Cf. also Soper 1959, 259–265.

was outshadowed by that of Udyāna's, but it was seen *in situ* by Xuanzang in what was left of the Jetavana monastery at Śrāvastī;[19] more than two centuries earlier Faxian 法顯 had also seen it, but here the matter is complicated by the fact that he describes it as a sandalwood image, and, moreover, in that context tells the story of its coming to life and accepting the Buddha's charge which, as we have seen, elsewhere is attributed to its rival from Kauśāmbī.[20]

It is obvious that these traditions are utterly unhistorical. So far no existing representation of the Buddha can be dated earlier than the first century AD, and the first reliable literary references to making and worshipping Buddha images occur in two archaic Chinese translations, both of which were completed in 179 AD.[21] However, in spite of their legendary nature some attention had to be paid to them here because of the impact they were to have in early medieval China.

References to Image-making in the Vinaya and Related Texts

As has been pointed out above, the bits of information contained in the Chinese versions of the *Vinaya* of various schools may be stereotyped and prescriptive, but they also are rather concrete and down-to-earth. The texts reflect a situation in which religious images are made for worship and for gathering karmic 'merit' for oneself; no reference is made to setting up votive images for the benefit of the donor's deceased relatives, nor do the texts mention the use of icons as mental supports for meditation, and no miracles are reported in connection with icons. For all *Vinaya* texts the date of the first Chinese translation provides the *terminus ante quem*, but apart from that landmark they are very difficult to date, especially since such huge collections of disciplinary rules had gradually taken shape for centuries; each of them no doubt contains a nucleus of very early date. In the passages dealing with iconography, the production of Buddha images is taken for granted, and they therefore can hardly be older than the first century AD. There is, however, one puzzling exception: a passage in the

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19 T 2087 (see note 17 above), j. 6, p. 899b; trsl. Beal 1906, II, 4; trsl. Watters 1904, I, 384.

20 T 2085, *Gaoseng Faxian zhuan* 高僧法顯傳, p. 860b; trsl. Beal 1906, I, XLIV.

21 T 224, *Daoxing banruo jing* 道行般若經, the earliest translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, made by Lokakṣema, j. 10, p. 476b, and, by the same translator, T 417/418, *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經 (*Pratyutpannasamādhi-sūtra*), p. 899c and 906a. The date is based upon an anonymous colophon preserved in T 2145, the catalogue *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 compiled by Sengyou 僧祐 (completed shortly before 518 CE), j. 7, p. 47c.

Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin school[22] in which the proverbial benefactor of the *saṅgha*, the rich banker Anāthapiṇḍada, appears to refer to some kind of prohibition against representing the Buddha:

> He addressed the Buddha, saying: 'Lord, since one ought not make (*buying zuo* 不應作) images of the Buddha's body, would the Buddha please allow me to make images of the attendant bodhisattvas (*zuo pusa shixiang* 作菩薩侍像)?' The Buddha said: 'You are allowed to do so'.[23]

[6] It is a puzzling statement, even more so since nowhere in the same *Vinaya* corpus (nor in any other one) the making of Buddha icons figures among the formal prohibitions. In any case it is the only passage in the *Vinaya* that may perpetuate the memory of the 'aniconic' phase of Indian Buddhist art. The latest and most extensive *Vinaya* corpus, that of the Mūla-sarvāstivādins,[24] contains some fairly detailed sets of rules concerning the production, adornment and worship of images and their localisation inside the monastic compound. In the case-stories connected with these rules the role of the benefactor usually is played by Anāthapiṇḍada as the archetype of the wealthy donor.

Thus we find the pious banker asking the Buddha's permission to install images in the monastery and to adorn them in various ways. The passage is lengthy and repetitious; it may be summarised as follows. Anāthapiṇḍada asks permission to have a sandalwood image made, so that the monks may be 'disciplined' by its majestic appearance when the Buddha himself is not present. After having granted his permission to do so, the Buddha allows the donor, in a sequence of questions and answers: (1) to install banners (*qifan* 旗幡) of five kinds, *viz.* [representing?] lions, *makaras, nāgas, garuḍas*, and 'Kings of Oxen' (*niuwang* 牛王, *ṛṣabha*); (2) to suspend the banners from iron masts; (3) to adorn the statue with necklaces and other ornaments, with the exception of anklets and earrings; (4) to rub its hands and feet with various perfumes; (5) to let it be moved in and out [during processions?] in a carriage: (6) to honour it with parasols; (7) to place 'lucky things' (*jixiang shi* 吉祥事) in front of it, and (8) to adorn the top of its head with garlands. The Jetavana

[22] T 1435 *Shisong lü* 十誦律, *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya*, 61 j. 1, trsl. by Kumārajīva in 404–405 CE, and finished by Vimalākṣa shortly after 409 CE.

[23] T 1435, j. 48, p. 352a.

[24] The enormous corpus of the *Mūla-sarvāstivāda-vinaya, Genben shuo yiqieyou bu pinaye* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶 figures in the Chinese canon under 17 separate headings (T 1442–1456); these sections as well as some related works belonging to that school were all translated by Yijing (635–713), to a total of more than 150 *juan.*

monastery then was adorned with bright-coloured paintings (*caihua* 彩畫), and the images were worshipped with flowers, incense and music (*guyue* 古樂), which made such a noise that the monks closed the gate of the *vihāra.* After the lay people had protested against that measure because 'it blocked the way to producing goodness', the Buddha proclaimed the rule that even when worship with musical accompaniment was going on, the gate had to stay open during the day, only to be closed at nightfall.[25] The incident is interesting, for it shows that this kind of noisy ceremonial is here regarded as wholly belonging to the sphere of lay devotion.[26]

Another passage in the same *Vinaya* is devoted to the subjects to be represented in painting (no doubt referring to wall paintings) and the places to be assigned to them. The latter makes a somewhat artificial, 'over-organized' impression, because according to this scheme there should be a symbolic correspondence between the content of the image and its localization, e.g. *nāgas* with water bottles being represented in the cistern, or pictures of corpses adorning the walls of the latrines. We may safely assume that the iconographic inventory of a large temple/monastery no doubt was less systematic in the symbolic distribution of images. The passage runs as follows:

> 'After Anāthapiṇḍada had donated the park, he thought: 'Without bright-coloured paintings [the *vihāra*] will not look fine. With the Buddha's permission I am going to adorn it.' He then went to the Buddha and informed him [of his intention]. The Buddha said: 'You may have paintings made, as you wish.' After having obtained the Buddha's permission, he collected bright-coloured [pigments], and called painters (*huagong*), telling them: 'Here are the bright-coloured [pigments]: you may use them to make paintings inside the monastery.' They answered: 'From where shall we start working? And what things do you want us to paint?' He retorted: 'I don't know either; I shall have to go and ask the Buddha.' The Buddha said; 'Householder, you shall have the following images made:
>
> – At both sides of the gate: *yakṣas* holding clubs;
> – Next, on the side walls [of the gate building?]: on one side a scenic representation (*bian* 變) showing feats of supernatural power, and on the other side a Wheel of birth-and-death[27] [showing] the Five Karmic Destinations;

25 T 1452, *Genben shuo yigieyou bu nituona mudejia* 根本說一切有部尼陀那目得迦 (*Mūlasarvāstivāda-nidānamātṛkā*), j. 5, p. 435b–c.

26 See also the article of Karel R. van Kooij in this volume (note of the editors). ["Remarks on festivals and altars in early Buddhist art," In *Function and Meaning in Buddhist Art*, Groningen, 1995: 33–43.]

27 In T 1442, *Genben shuo yigieyou bu pinaye* (cf. note 24), j. 34, p. 811a-b we find a very detailed description of the 'Wheel of Birth-and-Death' (*shengsi lun* 生死輪), starting with

– Under the eaves: *jātaka* scenes;
– At the side of the Buddha Hall (*fodian* 佛殿): a *yakṣa* holding a garland;
– In the Preaching Hall (*jiangtang* 講堂): pictures showing old and experienced *bhikṣus* preaching and extolling the essence of the Doctrine;
– In the Refectory: a *yakṣa* holding cakes (*bing* 餅);
– At the side of the gate of the Storehouse: a *yakṣa* holding a precious object;
– In the cistern: a *nāga* holding a water-bottle and wearing a wonderful necklace;
– The Bathroom and Fire-room are adorned with paintings modelled after the *Scripture of the Divine Messengers*,[28] and there you shall also make some scenic representations of the Hells (*diyu bian* 地獄變);
– In the Hospital: a picture showing the Tathāgata in person taking care of the sick;
– In the Latrines: corpses with frightful appearances; inside the [monks'] cells (*fang* 房) you may likewise paint skeletons consisting of white bones.'[29]

It is to be noted that in this description mention is made of a 'Buddha-hall' but not of a cult statue representing the Buddha. The omission is, however, not significant, because the text specifically deals with (wall-) paintings and not with three-dimensional representation. In another *Vinaya* text of the same school, and also translated by Yijing 義淨, it is expressly stated that 'the image of the Venerable One' (*zunxiang* 尊像) has either to be placed on the third floor of the main building, at the back side, in a hall having the surface of three cells combined, or in a separate two-storied pavillion,
[7] where it daily will be provided with flowers and incense.[30]

the Buddha image on a white background in the hub, and moving outward, describing the concentric zones and finally the monstrous Mahākāla holding the Wheel in its claws. The text adds an interesting detail: it served as a kind of elementary schematic introduction to the doctrine, and a monk was placed in front of it to explain its meaning to lay people. Although no textual evidence for other kinds of such oral exposition exists, we could easily imagine that it also was done in other cases, e.g. by explaining pictures of *jātaka* stories.

[28] *Tianshi jing* 天使經, referring to the 'Scripture of the Five Messengers of Death', of which Chinese versions are found in two *āgamas*: T 26, *Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經 (*Madhyamāgama*), section 64, and T 125, *Zengyi ahan jing* (*Ekottarāgama*), section 32.4; in addition, two separate Chinese versions have been preserved: T 42, 'The Scripture of the Iron-walled Hell', *Tiecheng nili jing* 鐵城泥犁經 translated by Zhu Tanwulan 竺曇無蘭 (Dharmaratna?), late fourth century, and a mid-fifth century 'Scripture of the Five Messengers of King Yama', *Yanluo wang wutianshizhe jing* 閻羅王五天使者經 translated by Huijian 慧簡. The corresponding text in the Pāli canon is the *Devadūta-sutta* in *Aṅguttara-nikāya* III, 35. The short scripture tells how the sinner is dragged before the king.

[29] T 1451, *Genben shuo yiqieyou bu pinaye zashi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事 (*Mūla-s.-v.-kṣudrakavastu*), j. 17, p. 283a–b.

[30] T 1459, *Genben shuo yiqieyou bu pinaye song* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶頌, a *Vinaya* compendium in verse, by the Indian master 'Pisheji 毘舍佉' (Vaiśākhya?) and translated by

Another passage, in which Anāthapiṇḍada again plays the leading role, deals with the decoration of a *stūpa*:

> 'Does the Buddha allow me to plaster the walls (of the *stūpa*) in red, black and white?' The Buddha said: 'You may.' [Anāthapiṇḍada] said: 'Does the Buddha allow me to have paintings made upon the *stūpa*?' The Buddha said: 'With the exception of men and women in sexual union, all other [subjects] may be painted.'[31]

In spite of the comparatively late date of the *Mūla-sarvāstivādin* corpus as translated by Yijing, there is no need to interpret the prohibition of sex scenes as referring to Tantric iconography. It rather is intended to prevent the monks from becoming sexually aroused; the *Vinaya* expressly condemns the use of exciting pictures for such a purpose. The somewhat self-evident prohibition of representing sexual intercourse is also found in the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* (which certainly dates from pre-Tantric times) in a list of five kinds of gift [to the *saṅgha*] that do not produce merit: 'women; instruments for (theatrical) plays; pictures of men and women in sexual union; wine, and improper words'.[32]

In another context, the early fifth century translation of the *Mahāsāṅghika-vinaya*[33] contains the same prohibition: all other subjects may be represented in sculpture or painting. Nevertheless, the text goes on to give a strange selection of five subjects that apparently are deemed particularly appropriate: 'venerable *bhikṣus*, vines, *makara*, geese, corpses, and mountains-and-forests'.[34]

Elsewhere we find some more rules and prohibitions concerning subjects to be represented in the *vihāra*: monks are not allowed to adorn the doors or gates (*hu* 戶) with images of snakes and of armed horesemen;[35] on the other hand, permission is granted to represent Maheśvara and the 'Demon-mother' (*Guizi mu* 鬼子母), i.e. Hārītī with her children.[36]

Yijing; j. 2, p. 651b. A less detailed survey of the lay-out of a large monstery is given in the *Vinaya* of the Mahāsāṅghikas, T 1425 (cf. below, note 32), but that passage does not contain any iconographic information.

31 T 1435, *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* (cf. note 22), j. 48, p. 351c.

32 *Ib.*, j. 50, p. 363b.

33 T 1425, *Mohesengqi lü* 摩訶僧祇律 (*Mahāsāṅghika-vinaya*), 40 *j.*, translated by Buddhabhadra and Faxian, early fifth century CE.

34 T 1425, j. 33, pp. 496c–497a.

35 T 1428, *Sifen lü* 四分律 (*Dharmaguptaka-vinaya*), trsl. by Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, late fourth century CE, j. 50, p. 941a.

36 Maheśvara: *ib.*, j.50, p. 937c. Hārītī: T 1483–1484, two recensions of a short *Vinaya* compendium in dialogue form entitled *Mulian wen jielü zhong wubai qingzhong shi* 目連

There can be no doubt that in the vast majority of cases such icons and statues were made by professional artisans, and that they were paid to do their job. They are not permanently associated with the *vihāra*: we have already seen how Anāthapiṇḍada 'summons' the artisans to have the job done, and in another *Vinaya* passage the 'painting artisans' (*huagong*) are mentioned as a guild-like group of professional workers, along with other groups active in the building trade: brickmakers, tile-makers, carpenters and plasterers. Like these colleagues, the painters, when asked to finish the work in a very short time, tell the patron 'If you have the money and the materials, we'll do the job!'[37] And apparently it was a good job in terms of remuneration. When the parents of the boy Upāli think about letting him learn a trade in which he will make a very good living, they successively consider writing, arithmatic, and painting[38] (it is interesting that in the corresponding passage in the Pāli *Vinaya* 'painting' does not figure; in its place the text has 'money-changing').[39]

The *Vinaya* texts contain hardly any specific information about the techniques used in making images. There is, however, one interesting passage that deals with the construction of clay images:

> [The formation of the skeleton in the foetus] may be compared to the way in which a master-modeller (*sushi* 塑師) or his disciple will first build a frame of strong [pieces of] wood, and then, after having bound these together with cords, applies the various kinds of clay, and so creates the image.[40]

We may assume that the work of repairing paintings and statues normally also was entrusted to such specialised artisans. Especially wall-paintings were vulnerable and prone to decay by flaking off or by the deterioration of the pigments. It is interesting to note that according to a *Vinaya* rule paintings shall not be maintained in a state of decay: they either have to be whitewashed, or restored to the original state by repainting.[41] Here we no doubt encounter the Indian counterparts of those artisan-painters who in Chinese monasteries were constantly busy repainting or adding colour to pictures originally executed in black-and-white (*baihua* 白畫)

問戒律中五百輕重事, 'Questions asked by Maudgalyāyana about five hundred grave or less important *Vinaya*-topics', anonymous, probably fourth century; p. 973b and 985a.

[37] T 1442 (cf. note 26), j. 30, p. 790c–791a.

[38] T 1428 (cf. note 36), j. 17, p. 679c.

[39] Cf. Horner 1949, III, 10.

[40] T 1451 (cf. note 30), j. 11, p. 255b.

[41] T 1458, *Genben sapoduo bu lü she* 根本薩婆多部律攝 (*Mūla-sarvāstivāda-vinayasaṃgraha*), a *Vinaya* compendium composed by the Indian master 'Shengyou 勝友' (=Jinamitra?), trsl. by Yijing; j. 4, p. 545a.

to the dismay of serious art-lovers who many times sadly observe that an ancient masterpiece 'has been spoiled by artisans laying on colours' (*gongren cheng se sun* 工人成色損).[42] In the religious sphere such aesthetic considerations did not count: the painting was an object that had to be kept in good shape, and, from the patron's point of view, the donated image had to be there, with bright colours, and for everyone to see. The criterium was efficacy, not aesthetics.

However, they were more than just objects; they were sanctified by their content. It is not without reason that the artisan has to take a bath before starting to paint an icon.[43] Of course, the image of the Buddha himself is an object of worship that has to be handled with special reverence, and the *Vinaya* contains several passages relevant to that aspect. On no account a Buddha statue may be exposed to rain if it has been moved outside,[44] and if it is situated on the ground floor, one is not allowed to live upstairs above it. The holiness of the object even neutralises the evil effect of what in itself is a sin: stealing a Buddha image is not an offence if it is done in order to worship it (those who do so in order to sell it are of course guilty).[45] Making a Buddha image is subjected to the rule that it has to represent his complete body, as we learn from an early sixth century Chinese version of a *sūtra*[46] exclusively devoted to the obligation of the pious lay believer:

> It is not allowed to make an image representing [only] one half of the Buddha's body. If there is a Buddha image that renders the body in an incomplete way, it has to be covered up and stored away, after which somebody
> [8] will be asked to restore it; once it has been restored to completeness, it [may] be exhibited.[47]

The requirement to render the 'complete' shape of the Buddha has nothing to do with aesthetic or artistic ideals; it is a logical consequence of the

[42] E.g. *Lidai minghua ji* (cf. note 2). j. 3, p. 53 (trsl. Acker 1954, I, 266); *ib.*, p. 54 (Acker 1954, I, 268); *ib.*, p. 56 (Acker 1954, I, 272); *ib.*, p. 68 (Acker 1954, I, 321); *Yizhou minghua lu* (cf. note 5), pp. 4, 9, 11, 13.

[43] T 1451 (cf. note 28), j. 16, p. 278a.

[44] T 1442 (cf. note 24), j. 28, p. 782b.

[45] T 1440, *Sapoduo pini piposha* 薩婆多毘尼毘婆沙 (*Sarvāstivāda-vinaya-vibhāṣā*), anonymous fifth century translation; j. 2, p. 517a.

[46] T 1488, *Youposai jie jing* 優婆塞戒經 (*Upāsakaśīla-sūtra*?), 7 *j.*, translated by Dharmakṣema, ca. 420 CE. Section 17 contains detailed prescriptions about the lay devotee's duties regarding the building and upkeep of the *stūpas* and the making, worship and repair of religious images.

[47] T 1488, j. 4, p. 1052a.

wish to represent the Buddha's body with all its thirty-two 'characteristics' (*lakṣaṇa*, *xiang* 相), as far as that is technically possible. A 'Buddha bust' would sin against that fundamental iconic principle. In a Chinese apocryphal scripture the Buddha even makes the statement that a master-artisan (*xiangshi* 像師) who makes a Buddha image without its *lakṣaṇa* will be punished by having incomplete sense-organs during five million lives.[48]

To some extent the Buddha statue, once finished, is 'sacrosanct'—that at least seems to be the reasoning behind a curious pronouncement attributed to the Buddha in conversation with Mahā-Maudgalyāyana:

> He asked: 'If someone has made a Buddha image in which the nostrils are not [indicated by] holes, may others later make them?' [The Buddha] answered: 'It is not allowed to do so.'[49]

And in painting a Buddha one must see to it that the pigments used do not contain substances of animal origin, like glue, milk, or egg.[50]

The fact that in many cases Buddha statues were gilded (in an attempt to reproduce the Buddha's 'gold-coloured body', one of his *lakṣaṇas*) led to a curious situation, because according to an important *Vinaya* rule monks and nuns are not allowed to touch gold or silver. The prohibition obviously refers to bullion and coins, and was meant to prevent the monks from engaging in trade. In general, the *Vinaya* does not extend it to include Buddha images made of, or covered with, these precious metals, but in this respect the corpus of the *Mahāsāṅghika* is particularly strict:

> [As to images and other cultic objects made of gold or silver], the *bhikṣu* is not allowed to take them in his own hands; he must let the lay brothers (*jingren* 淨人) do so. If [such an object] has fallen over, he must grasp it [selecting] a spot where there is no gold. If [the object] is completely plated with gold, he must grasp it after having wrapped his hand in a piece of cloth or the like.... If at [the ceremonial of] 'bathing' the bodhisattva's image is made of gold or silver, [the monk] is not allowed to wash it himself; he should make a lay brother do it. If during a grand assembly there are images made of gold or silver, the lay brothers should be made to carry them outside. The *bhikṣu* may render some assistance, but he is not allowed to hold them.[51]

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48 The *Fo zai jinguan jingfu jing* 佛在金棺敬福經 ('Scripture [spoken by] the Buddha in his golden coffin about the merit of devotion', quoted in Daoshi's seventh-century encyclopaedia *Fayuan zhulin*, T 2122, *j.* 33, p. 540a. The scripture is mentioned among the apocrypha in the catalogue *Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu* 大周刊定眾經目錄 of 695 CE, T 2153, j. 15, p. 472c (combined with the text mentioned in note 59).

49 T 1483–1484 (cf. note 35), p. 973b and 984c.

50 T 1488 (cf. note 45), j. 4, p. 1052a.

51 T 1425 (cf. note 32), j. 10, p. 312b.

It is not surprising that, being a corpus of monastic rules, the *Vinaya* pays little attention to the use of iconic objects in lay Buddhism. Lay believers obviously were not subjected to the prohibition mentioned above, but on the other hand they occasionally needed clerical assistance in their observances conducted at home. In the *Mahāsāṅghika-vinaya* the rule that no monk is allowed to spend a night at a layman's home is illustrated by a 'case story' about a lay believer who wants to worship a Buddha image in an evening service at his home, and therefore invites a monk to arrange the altar (lit. 'seat', *zhuangzuo* 床座) and adorn it with banners and parasols.[52]

Since the representation of religious scenes is such a worthy activity, it is somewhat surprising to find a rule forbidding monks to make images of living beings:

> [Monks] must not represent living beings in painting. If they do so, they will be guilty of a transgression. [On the other hand], if they make images representing corpses or skeletons, no offense is committed.[53]

It may be that this prohibition is no more than a special application of the general rule that monks are not allowed to engage in any kind of material production, but this is not very likely in view of the fact that elsewhere monks are described as performing certain kinds of manual labour (notably when building a *vihāra* or lodgings for individual monks). It is more probable that it should be related to a theme that figures several times in various texts: the idea that holy icons never should become a kind of merchandise in the hands of monks.

In the early disciplinary text containing the answers given to Mahāmaudgalyāyana which we have quoted above, such simony is strongly condemned;

> He asked: 'What is the sin committed by a *bhikṣu* who sells a Buddha image?' He answered: 'It is equal to the sin of selling one's father and mother!'[54]

The theme is further elaborated in some later Mahāyāna scriptures in which it is made clear that the prohibition covers the sale of all kinds of images,

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52 *Ib*., j. 8, p. 298a.

53 T 1451 (cf. note 28), j. 11, p. 252a. It is possible that the prohibition refers to pictures that have no religious message. That would make it understandable why in T 1483–1484 (cf. note 35), p. 973b and 984c, the Buddha allows the making of images of human beings, gods and animals provided that they 'figure [in the representation] alongside the Buddha'.

54 T 1483–1484, p. 973c and 985b.

whatever the materials they are made of. Thus, the *Smṛtyupasthāna-sūtra*[55] condemns not only the sale, but also the use of such ill-gotten icons:

> Anyone who, having left the household [and having entered the *saṅgha*], sells Buddha images, whether they be made of ivory, or embroidery, or painted upon cotton cloth, or carved from wood, or made of bronze and other [metals], is a person full of evil and desire. Objects obtained [in this way] shall not be used for religious purposes (lit. 'in *dharma* [-activities], *fazhong* 法中).[56]

The condemnation of simony has taken the familiar form of a 'prediction of future degeneration' in a passage of the *Ratnakūṭa*:[57]

> After five hundred years, when the *saṅgha* has lost its morale, there will be monks who paint Buddha images on cotton or on walls and so make their
> [9] living. They will no more be able to practise *samādhi* and to recite the scriptures; that is why they exclusively concentrate on that kind of work. Such a practice is outrageous: if it is already a bad thing to sell animals, what to think about selling the image of the Tathāgata?[58]

The prohibition is here restricted to members of the *saṅgha* and is not directed against the artisans who, in a way, were 'selling the Buddha' by accepting their wages. In China we occasionally find traces of a stricter attitude. In a Chinese apocryphal text it is said that since both the patron and the artisan will already be amply rewarded by karmic retribution, wages should neither be offered nor accepted: 'He shall not accept any wages; [if he does], it is like becoming rich by selling his father and mother',[59] and another equally apocryphal scripture also threatens those who make Buddha images 'for a living' (*jingying* 經營) with terrible karmic punishment.[60]

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[55] T 721, *Zheng fa nian chu jing* 正法念處經, 70 j., translated by Prajñāruci, first half sixth century CE.

[56] T 721, j. 43, p. 258b.

[57] T 310, *Da baoji jing* 大寶積經, compiled by Bodhiruci, early eighth century CE, largely making use of earlier Chinese translations which he incorporated into this huge (120 *juan*) composite work. The section in which this passage occurs (section 23, 'The Assembly of Mahākāśyapa') is identical with a *Da Jiaye jing* 大迦業經 translated in the mid-sixth century by 'Yueposhouna' (Ūrdhvaśūnya?).

[58] T 410, section 23, p. 512c.

[59] *Fo zai jin guan jing fu jing* (cf. note 47), *loc.cit.*

[60] *Zuifu jue yi jing* 罪福決疑經 ('Scripture solving points of doubt concerning sin and merit', mentioned as apocryphal in T 2153, j. 15, p. 472c), quoted in T 2122, *Fayuan zhulin* (cf. note 47), j. 33, p. 540a.

Mahāyāna Developments: Devotion, Visualisation and Transcendence

The Mahāyāna movement (or rather the combination of different, movements that came to be called the Great Vehicle) has maintained the various uses of icons that had developed in the preceding centuries and that we find described in the *Vinaya* passages that we have encountered so far: the icon as a pious donation made to accumulate merit; as an object of worship, and—to some extent, but not yet very outspoken—as a sacred image endowed with very special properties. All this especially refers to icons representing the Buddha himself. In addition, we have found some passing references to other kinds of religious imagery represented in temples and monasteries: protective (*yakṣas*); cautionary (Hell scenes); edifying (*jātaka* and *avadāna* scenes), symbolic (the Wheel of Birth-and-Death) and abhorrent (skeletons, corpses—no doubt related to the mental concentration on the Impure). Occasionally we have also found references to deities and other supernatural beings (Indra, Hārītī, *nāgas*). Some texts suggest that a very wide range of subjects could be used ('everything except sex'), although the religious character was to be maintained—one text even goes so far as to state that images of gods, human beings and animals are only allowed if they figure 'at the side of the Buddha'[61] (*fo bian zuo* 佛邊作; I suppose that this should be taken to mean 'figuring in a context in which the Buddha also is present').

In all these respects the Mahāyāna shared in this tradition and further developed it. In the first place that holds true for the use of image-making as a means to accumulate merit. This aspect is set forth in the *Lotus Sūtra*[62]—by far the most popular and influential scripture in East Asian Buddhism—in the hyperbolic language typical of Mahāyāna texts:

> 'Whoever for the Buddha establishes images
> and by engraving and sculpture [reproduces] all *lakṣaṇas*:
>   all those have already realised Buddhahood.
> Whoever makes richly adorned Buddha images
> made of the seven precious substances,
> or made of brass, red and white copper,
> or pewter, lead, tin, iron, wood, and even clay,
> or with cloth [covered with] sticky lacquer:
>   all such people have already realised Buddhahood.

[61] Cf. note 52 above.
[62] T 262, *Miao fa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*), translated by Kumārajīva in 406 CE.

> Whoever paints Buddha images in bright colours
> adorned with the *lakṣaṇas* that bring fortune hundredfold
> either doing it themselves, or having others do it:
> all those have already realised Buddhahood.
> Nay, even young children who when playing picture the Buddha
> by means of grass or twigs, or using a brush,
> or even by scratching [the soil] with their fingernails:
> all those will gradually accumulate merit;
> they will fully acquire the mind of great compassion,
> and they all [actually] have already realised Buddhahood.'[63]

Apart from containing some interesting concrete information (such as the reference to making statues of lacquered cloth), this text clearly shows the continuation of one essential function of the sacred image: the accumulation of merit. The new and typical Mahāyāna element naturally lies in the final aim to be achieved through such good works: not merely rebirth at a higher stage of existence, but Buddhahood. The same holds good for the second basic function: the image as an object of worship. In fact, the text continues to stress that aspect, using the same hyperboles: Buddhahood actually has already been achieved by one who worships the statue or painted image with flowers, incense, banners and parasols—and then, in a descending order, by offering a single flower; by kneeling down; by joining the palms of the hands, by raising one hand, or even by slightly nodding with the head. All those will realise the highest Way and will enter into complete Extinction 'like a fire that dies for lack of fuel'.

Another Mahāyāna element that was to have a tremendous impact upon Buddhist art was the belief in the plurality of Buddhas and the cult especially devoted to some 'extraterrestrial' saviours such as Amitābha in the west and Akṣobhya in the east. The multiplication of objects of worship was accompanied by the inclusion of countless bodhisattvas into the growing Buddhist pantheon, and the development of special cults devoted to some of these, notably the future Buddha Maitreya and the two acolytes of Amitābha.

The worship of the Buddha image inside the temple/monastery was by no means a Mahāyāna innovation. As we have seen, the various *Vinayas*
[10] regularly refer to it. In the context of the Mahāyāna belief in the plurality of Buddhas and in the possibility to be reborn in one of their splendid

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[63] T 262, j. 1, p. 8c–9a; in Dharmarakṣa's earlier version (T 263, *Zheng fahua jing* 正法華經, late third century CE), j. 1, p. 71a–b, the text of the corresponding passage is badly garbled.

'Buddha-worlds' a new development took place, in which iconographical representation and religious practice went hand in hand.

The practice consisted of a special type of mental concentration called 'Commemoration of the Buddha' (*nian fo* 念佛, *buddhānusmṛti*) in which the practicant gradually built up a detailed mental picture of the object of worship: the Buddha (mostly Amitābha: sometimes also the bodhisattva Maitreya in the Tuṣita heaven) with all his marks, his acolytes, and his glorious entourage. There is ample evidence, both in scriptural sources and in the Chinese biographical records, that in many cases this *samādhi* was performed in front of a concrete image, either a statue or (more effectively) a detailed painting, a 'paradise scene'.

The practice appears to go back to a very early stage in the Mahāyāna development, since it is mentioned in the first dated Chinese translation of a Buddhist text: the 'Sūtra of the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi*' (*Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經), produced at Luoyang in 179 AD by the Indo-scythian Lokakṣema. It extols this *samādhi* as a way to visualise all Buddhas of all directions of space to make them 'stand before one's eyes' (*xian zai qian* 現在前, *saṃmukhāvasthita*; actually the *sūtra* concentrates upon the visualisation of Amitābha), and in both recensions of this archaic version it is clearly stated that one way to acquire this power is 'to make a statue or painting of the Buddha, and to use it in order to achieve this *samādhi*'.[64]

Several Mahāyāna scriptures are wholly or partially devoted to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* as a means to or as a preparation for rebirth in an ideal Buddha-world, or at the feet of Maitreya, either in the Tuṣita heaven where he awaits his incarnation, or in the distant future after he will have achieved Buddhahood.

The practice came to play a specially important role in Amitābha devotionalism, where visualisation was combined with (and eventually supplanted by) the endless invocation of the Buddha's sacred name. However, the technique of visualisation is set forth at great length in one of its basic texts, the 'Scripture of the Visualisation of the Buddha Amitāyus'.[65] Apart from elaborating the theme of rebirth in Sukhāvatī in various ways, depending upon the stage of spiritual progress reached by the devotee, the scripture is largely devoted to a very detailed description of the technique of visualisation, the adept systematically building up the image in

[64] T 417–418 (cf. note 21), p. 899c and 906a.

[65] T 365, *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* 觀無量壽佛經, translated by Kālayaśas, first half Fifth century; esp. pp. 342a sqq.

sixteen stages, starting with the vision of the sun setting in the West and the material elements of the western Buddha-world: the flat surface, the rows of jewel-trees, the lotus ponds, etcetera. After the setting has been created, the images are formed of the saviours, first Amitābha himself, and then his acolytes Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta in all their glory. The description is so detailed and so full of recognisable iconographical elements that the text presupposes the existence of the highly elaborate and impressive paradise scenes that in China became one of the favourite topics of Buddhist art. There can be no doubt that such scenes were used as aids in *buddhānusmṛti* meditation of the kind described in this text.

The use of icons in meditation is even more clearly attested by another Mahāyāna *sūtra*: the '*Sūtra* of the Sea of *Samādhi* of Visualising the Buddha' (*Guan fo sanmei hai jing* 觀佛三昧海經), which has already been mentioned above (note 15) in relation to the miracle of Udyāna's statue coming to life and conversing with the Buddha. In fact, the Buddha's glorified body with all its major marks and secondary characteristics plays the central role in this extremely elaborate text, first by describing how the Buddha magically projected his image (lit. his 'shadow') on the wall of the *nāga*-cave at Nagarahāra (near Haḍḍa in Afghanistan), and then by a very detailed description of all the Buddha's bodily marks. In both cases the description is placed in the context of visualisation technique, and the use of actual images is made very explicit, the main difference being that the 'shadow image' represents the Buddha in a sitting posture, whereas the more elaborate account of the visualisation in successive stages refers to a standing figure.[66]

The text distinguishes two sequences of mental image-building, one starting from above (concentrating on the Buddha's *uṣṇīṣa*) and gradually moving down to the marks on the soles of his feet, and the other one starting at the bottom and moving upward. The visualisation technique connected with the 'shadow image' is less systematic, for the practicant is free to choose what part of the sacred body may be chosen as the first crystallisation point for building up the image. Here the interesting point is that the visualisation, which is performed in a temple, is combined with worship, penitence, and performing menial tasks (such as plastering the floor and sweeping the monks' quarters), which suggests that the *samādhi* is to be practised by lay believers. The practice of meditation is

[66] For a discussion of this text and its iconographical significance see Soper 1959, 184 sqq.

hereby extended to the lay community, and combined with 'pious works', a development that of course is characteristic of the Mahāyāna. However, as has been noted above, at a more philosophical level the Mahāyāna doctrine of universal 'Emptiness' basically invalidated the use of images, concrete as well as mental, of any thing or concept whatsoever—the highest Truth is 'without characteristics' (*wuxiang* 無像, *alakṣaṇa*), and since the Buddha himself at that level of abstraction is identical with the Absolute, no image can ever do justice to it. In fact, in scholastic thought the true '*Dharma*-body of the Buddha' (*fashen* 法身, *dharmakāya*) is simply another way of referring to the inexpressible Emptiness in which all distinctions are obliterated. Countless times that basic message is repeated in the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts and in many other Mahāyāna scriptures and treatises.

[11] In principle, this line of reasoning would be irreconcilable with the production and use of icons, if it were not balanced by the equally important Mahāyāna concept of 'expedience' or 'adaptation' (*fangbian* 方便, *upāya*). Since the ultimate Truth as such is inaccessible, we need concepts, words and images to approximate it. As long as we are not fully awakened, we have to use them, and they will not hamper us as long as we realize their provisional, preparatory and relative nature. Images can, and, indeed, should be made and worshipped as imperfect signs or tools.

In this way a philosophical compromise was found between two trends within Mahāyāna that very probably came from very different quarters: popular devotionalism and scholastic thought. The compromise is expressed in many variations, such as the stereotyped opening lines of inscriptions and laudatory texts relating to Buddha images: 'The [highest] Principle, being all-pervading, is empty and still, and no mould or model is able to convey it. [However], the process of *karman* takes place in response to causes, and without concrete forms we would have no way to influence it',[67] or: 'The Numinous Pattern is sublime and empty; as a principle it is inaccessible to the world of dust; however, if we would not represent visible signs in order to make manifest its glorious likeness…, how could we hope to approach its highest Image, and make a likeness of

[67] Opening lines of a panagyric about a Śākyamuni image made in 482 CE, by Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), in T 2103, *Guang hong ming ji* 廣弘明集, j. 16, p. 211b.

its spiritual workings?'[68] There is no other way: 'We need the scriptures to hear about the Buddha, and we need images to express the Truth'.[69]

Against this background many typically Mahāyāna statements about the use and worship of icons must be understood. In the early *Prajñāpāramitā* passage referred to above (see note 21) on the one hand it is affirmed that 'the reason why people make Buddha images is only to let them obtain the merit resulting from it', and on the other hand the fact is stressed that the image is as unreal as any other composite thing—in fact, as unreal as the body of the Buddha itself. As a later text of the same class says: one must make Buddha images, build *stūpas* and worship them, and perform traditional rituals such as 'bathing the Buddha', but at the same time one must transcend such activities by 'transferring' the merit to all other beings and to the achievement of complete Enlightenment.'[70]

In the same way, the use of icons in meditation is relativised yet maintained, by viewing it *sub specie vacuitatis*; for the true *buddhānusmṛti* is image-less: 'One makes appear the image of the Tathāgata before one's eyes, and yet in truth there is no body of the true Suchness, and there never has been any body of the Tathāgata'.[71]

Sometimes this line of thought leads to a further paradox which, as it were, makes the icon itself into an abstract entity and thereby raises it to a higher level: the image is identical with the Buddha himself, because both are illusory. Thus, according to the mid-sixth century Chinese version of a typical *śūnyavāda* scripture, the *bodhisattva* Mahāvīrya is instructed by a god to practise the Buddha-contemplation in this immaterialised way:

> Then he took an image painted upon a sheet of cotton and went with it deep into the mountains, to some quiet spot, not inhabited by people, birds and animals. There he opened and displayed the painted image; he made a seat of grass, and then sat down cross-legged in front of the icon ... Then he

[68] Words attributed to Huiyuan 慧遠, spoken in 578 CE in defense of the making of Buddhist images when Emperor Wu 武 of the Northern Zhou 周 planned to destroy all *sūtras* and icons. It is interesting to note that in the court debate at which the final decision for the persecution was taken Wudi 武帝 himself used the metaphysical argument to justify the iconoclasm: 'The True Buddha has no image; [it is only] from afar that our reverence for him is revealed in our minds.' Cf. T 2104, *Ji gujin Fo Dao lunheng* 集古今佛道論衡, j. 2, p. 374b.

[69] T 2104, *ib.*

[70] T 231, *Shengtianwang banruoboluomi jing* 勝天王般若波羅蜜經, translated by 'Yueposhouna 月婆首那' (*Ūrdhvaśūnya*?), mid-sixth century CE, j. 3, p. 703c.

[71] T 566, *Banruo deng lun shi* 般若燈論釋 (*Prajñāpradīpa-mūlamādhyamakavṛtti*), attributed to Nāgārjuna and Bhāvaviveka, trsl. by Prabhākaramitra, ca. 630 CE; j. 14, p. 121a.

> thought: 'How [can] I contemplate the Buddha?' At that moment a deity of the forest, knowing what he thought, said to him: 'My good man, . . . if you want to contemplate the Buddha you just have to contemplate the icon, for this icon is in no way different from the Tathāgata.' . . . [And then Mahāvīrya realised why]: 'The image of the Tathāgata is devoid of consciousness and knowledge, and so are all phenomena, they also are devoid of consciousness and knowledge. Such an icon is just a [conventional] term and so are phenomena, they also are just [conventional] terms . . .'.[72]

In this way not only the common practice of making and worshipping images, but also the more specialised use of icons in 'visualising' meditation could become an exercise in the realisation of Emptiness:

> Looking at the Buddha image is identical with contemplating the true Buddha . . . For such is the meaning of the *samādhi* of contemplating the Buddha: [it is done] not by its form, nor by its characteristics, nor by its clan, family or household, nor by [the differentiation] of past, present and future . . ., etc.[73]

The Chinese Scene: New Developments and Shifts of Accent

In medieval China virtually all the functions of Buddhist iconography were adopted and further developed. They coexisted with indigenous forms of Chinese religious practice, and at the popular level (which in this paper must be left out of consideration) many interesting hybrids came into being. However, taken as a whole, Buddhist iconography and beliefs, and the practices connected with it were so characteristic and so radically different from the pre-Buddhist Chinese heritage that they retained their specific Buddhist identity. Especially at the 'ecclesiastical' level, we find a clear continuation of Indian practices, beliefs and ideals. Statues and painted images are attested in written sources since the late second century AD as objects of worship, and the belief that the making and donation of images result in karmic merit (for the benefit of oneself, of deceased parents, and of 'all living beings') also was adopted very early, although
[12] reliable documentary evidence for it is not older than the fourth century. Since Mahāyāna—in many forms, from simple devotionalism to the most abstract areana of scholastic philosophy—was absolutely dominant in Chi-

[72] T 310, *Ratnakūṭa*, section 23 (cf. note 56), p. 513c.

[73] T 1521, *Shizhu piposha lun* 十住毘婆沙論 (*Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā*), attributed to Nāgārjuna and translated by Kumārajīva, early Fifth century CE; j. 7, p. 55b.

nese Buddhism, it is not surprising that both the laity and the monastic community took part in the production and worship of images, and that the use of icons in 'visualising meditation' is attested in both groups.

There are, however, a few areas where innovation took place or where some functions of iconography acquired a special significance, due to the Chinese cultural environment. Three of these are of particular importance in early medieval times: the role of a number of famous images as concrete links between China and India; the special importance of the miraculous power of the image as a sacred object, and the political use of iconography, certain images being used as auspicious *palladia* protecting the state and the ruling dynasty. The cultural background of each of these themes is complicated and cannot be adequately treated in this paper; here we can only present some main features.

Traditions Concerning 'Indian' Images Appearing in China

This obviously is an aspect of Buddhist iconography that could not have developed in India. The belief that certain Indian statues and reliquaries of Indian origin—most of them sacred objects believed to possess miraculous power—had been transported to China or had been 'discovered' in Chinese soil is attested in documentary sources since the mid-fourth century AD. Most of the stories told about such transports and discoveries are products of pious imagination or religious propaganda; in a few reported cases of miraculous discovery we cannot exclude the possibility that some objects actually were found and misinterpreted. The existence of such alleged Indian prototypes in China had a very real function: it served to create a direct and tangible relation between China and the holy land of Buddhism, and (at least in some cases) to prove that once, in a golden age, China already had been a Buddhist country. In addition, they also served a more down-to-earth purpose, for some stories appear to be outright fabrications made up in order to enhance the prestige of the temple that owned such a miraculous relic. The textual references to early medieval Buddhist iconography assembled by A. C. Soper in his invaluable *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China* (Soper 1959) mention some twenty images and reliquaries of alleged Indian origin. The lore connected with them generally belongs to two types: the appearance of the famous 'sandalwood Buddha image of king Udyāna' in China, and the 'discovery' of objects dating from the time of Aśoka.

As we have seen, Indian and Central Asian traditions concerning the Udyāna image were already confused and self-contradictory. Their

common theme is that the original sandalwood image had been transported to China, but the date and circumstances of that event vary widely in the different stories. Thus, according to Wang Yan, the late fifth century compiler of a collection of *mirabilia* entitled 'Notes on Mysterious Fortune', *Mingxiang ji* 冥祥記, the very first Buddhist missionary on Chinese soil, Kāśyapa Mātaṅga, is said to have brought the original statue with him to the Han court around 65 AD.[74] The Han emperor Ming, who according to a famous and rather early (but no doubt apocryphal) story had taken the initiative to introduce Buddhism into China, is here said to have welcomed the sacred image and to have ordered artisans to make copies of it for adoration in the imperial palace. This is a secondary elaboration of the original (probably third century) propagandistic tale, for in its earlier versions no mention is made of any image imported by the Buddhist missionary. The tradition reported by Wang Yan 王琰 does not appear to have become associated with any cult object then existing in China; it just remained a pious tale.

In that respect it was different from the story told about a sandalwood Buddha image with miraculous properties that in the late sixth century was kept by the Changle 長樂 monastery at present-day Yangzhou.[75] Here we have to do with an existing image, and the account of its origin and transportation to China was no doubt told at the Changle temple itself. The story of its peregrinations from Kauśāmbī to the Lower Yangzi region is too complicated to be retold here. It was said to have started its journey in the first half of the fourth century AD, when no one else but the father of the famous missionary and translator Kumārajīva had taken it to Kucha. Later Kumārajīva took this precious heirloom with him to China. For some time it stayed at Chang'an, where the local ruler regarded Kumārajīva and the sandalwood image as the two 'treasures of the state'; in 417, after Kumārajīva had died, it was carried to the south by a victorious Song 宋 general and installed in Nanjing, and still later—around 600—it was again moved to Changle si 長樂寺 at Yangzhou. Since at least that date there actually was a statue that was publicised by its owner as being the original Udyāna image, and it is quite probable that the whole obviously apocryphal story told about it was fabricated by the establishment of the Changle monastery in order to impress the public. In this respect they

[74] Passage of the lost *Mingxiang ji* quoted by Daoxuan (596–667) in T 2106 (for which see below, note 83), j. 2, p. 413c.

[75] T 2107 (cf. note 82), p. 437c; Soper 1959, 47–48 and 264.

were quite successful, for this 'Udyāna image' remained one of the most venerable relics to be seen and worshipped in China. It was in later centuries visited by Japanese pilgrims, and copies of it found their ways not only to other temples in China but also to Korea and Japan. It was moved from Yangzhou to Nanjing, from there to Kaifeng, and finally to Beijing, where it was installed in a shrine inside the Forbidden City. According to a Japanese source[76] it was carried home by Russian troops during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, and nothing has been heard of it since. Unfortunately, the statue at Changle si had a powerful rival, for the Daming 大明 monastery in Jingzhou boasted the possession of a perfect copy of the Udyāna
[13] image made in India. The story of its pedigree as told around the middle of the seventh century[77] is even more fantastic than that of the Yangzhou image. In this case the pious emperor Wu 武 of the Liang 梁 dynasty (r. 502–549 AD) had been moved by a dream to send an embassy to Śrāvastī in order to get hold of the original statue. The king refused to part with it, saying that this was the most famous image of India; instead he had a perfect copy made by his craftsmen, which immediately after its completion showed its supernatural qualities by various miraculous signs. After having survived untold hardships on their way back the embassy arrived safely at the Liang Court at Nanjing in 511, where the statue became one of the foremost religious treasures. After the pious emperor had died (549) it had been transported to Jingzhou. It is still mentioned as a famous and most sacred image in a collection of fanciful stories of 677 AD;[78] from another source we know that still another sandal-wood statue said to be Udyāna's original image was kept in one of the major temples at Chang'an, the Tang capital; it was lost in a temple fire in 668 AD.[79]

If the Udyāna theme played a prominent role in medieval Chinese iconic lore, the same holds even more true of the remarkable objects known as 'relics of Aśoka'.[80] The idea underlying the stories about their discovery was that Aśoka, who in the Buddhist tradition figures as a universal monarch, 'Turner-of-the-Wheel', had ruled over the whole continent of Jambudvīpa, including China, and that therefore in ancient times China had been a Buddhist country. This theme, that naturally was exploited for propagandistic purposes, was coupled with another well-known

[76] Tanaka Shigehisa 田中重久, quoted by Soper 1959, 265, n. 27.
[77] T 2106 (cf. note 82), j. 2, p. 419b–c (Soper 1959, 70–71).
[78] T 2107 (cf. note 82), p. 438b (Soper 1959, 71–72).
[79] Mentioned by Duan Chengshi (cf. above, note 6) in *Si ta ji*, T 2093, p. 1022c.
[80] For a survey of the 'relics of Aśoka', see Zürcher 1959, I, 277–280.

Buddhist tradition, *viz.* that the pious monarch had divided the relics of the Buddha's body and placed them in no less than 84,000 *stūpas* which he distributed all over his realm. Needless to say that all this whetted the appetite of Chinese monks in their quest for concrete evidence of China's Buddhist past and for sacred relics, the possession of which would place Chinese temples on a par with their Indian counterparts. All this resulted in a whole series of 'discoveries', the earliest of which are reported to have been made in the last quarter of the fourth century AD. They cover a whole series of objects excavated, or hauled up from the sea (or even found floating on the water): statues made of stone, gilded bronze, gold, or iron ore, golden reliquaries and other objects, some of them bearing inscriptions in Indian script, such as 'Made by the fourth daughter of King Aśoka of Kapilavastu'. As is to be expected, such treasures were installed in temples to be admired and worshipped, and quite a number of them were still extant in Tang times. In one case the tradition has been maintained till the present: a small, box-like reliquary made of wood or ivory, richly adorned with reliefs, that is said to have been discovered in the fourth century at Mouxian near Ningbo, and that ever since has been treasured by the Aśoka Temple (Ayuwang si 阿育王寺) at that place.[81] Like the various 'Udyāna images' preserved in Chinese temples in early Tang times, such relics of Aśoka were among the most renowned objects of worship; more than ten are mentioned in our sources together with the body of religious lore that had grown up around them.

Miracles and 'Responses'

Famous images like those associated with Udyāna or Aśoka were believed to have some special numinous quality that in Chinese is expressed by the untranslatable term *ling*; in fact, in biographical and hagiographical sources important statues very often figure in a context of auspicious signs and miracles. As has been said above, most of the Chinese Buddhist lore connected with iconography bears the stamp of its Indian origin, and the belief in such miracles is no exception. In general, the supernatural phenomena reported are the ones that also figure as stereotyped themes in Buddhist scriptures as well as in the Chinese pilgrims' reports, such as emitting light, flowers raining from the sky, mobility (or, on the contrary, resistance to all attempts to move the statue), immunity against fire,

[81] Cf. Soper 1959, 270–273. The reliquary was seen and photographed by H. Maspero 1914, 44–49.

celestial music and perfume, etc. However, the Indian inspiration is only one half of the story. At least as important are the traditional Chinese ideas about the 'mechanism of miracles'. There is ample evidence that in the Buddhist sphere the original Indian idea of divine power (the miracle taking place by the grace of a Buddha, gods or other higher beings) became amalgamated with the traditional Chinese concept of 'stimulus and response' (*ganying* 感應) or 'stimulus and fulfilment' (*gantong* 感通) which already in pre-Buddhist times had come to play a central role in the Chinese world-conception. Miracles take place as an automatic response to extraordinary human actions, either positive (virtue) or negative (misbehaviour); Nature reacts to happenings in the human sphere or, in the words of the *Book of Changes*: 'It is still and without movement, but when stimulated (*gan* 感) it brings all things in the world to successful completion (*tong* 通)'.[82] It is significant that the most important collections of stories about Buddhist auspicious happenings related to images and other material remains have titles in which *ganying* and *gantong* figure.[83]

In the traditional, pre-Buddhist sphere fortunate signs were believed to appear as tangible responses to virtue (such as the appearances of phoenixes, double-eared grain, 'sweet dew', and the discovery of auspicious objects like ancient bronzes and jade tablets), just as misbehaviour would elicit nefarious responses such as monstrous births, natural disasters and revolts. There no doubt is a direct link between that customary belief in the spontaneous appearance of 'auspicious things' as the result of virtue (or, in the Buddhist context, perfect devotion and religious zeal) and a number of Buddhist miracles reported in our sources: the materialisation of relics, the finding of Aśoka images and reliquaries, the discovery
[14] of other statues, invariably under miraculous circumstances, and usually as a result of extreme devotion. And since in the traditional world-view

[82] *Yijing* 易經, Xici 繫辭 A; ed. *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏, ed. Yiwen yinshuguan 藝文印書館, Taipei, 1955, vol. 1, j. 7, p. 24b.

[83] Cf. the 'Description of the Stimulus-and-Response of the Relics', *Sheli ganying ji* 舍利感應記 by Wang Shao 王劭 (602 CE), followed by a long list of supernatural manifestations reported from the various shrines, in Daoxuan's *Guang hong ming ji*, T 2103, j. 17, pp. 213b–221a, and two other works by Daoxuan: T 2106, the 'Records of Stimulus-and-Fulfilment of the Three Jewels Collected from [all places throughout] the Spiritual Realm (i.e. China)', *Ji Shenzhou sanbao ganlong lu* 集神州三寶感通録, both published in 664 CE. The latter work is a curiosum: it pretends to contain detailed information about famous images, pagodas etc. as supplied by some supernatural messengers who visited Daoxuan during his spritualistic séances. The content of most of the stories is of course quite fantastic, but as an example of religious propaganda based upon 'direct revelation' the text is of capital importance.

such responses especially took place in relation to human virtue or misbehaviour at the very top—the ruler and his entourage—it is not surprising that in a number of cases statues are reported to have reacted to political events affecting the position of the ruling house.

Icons and Portents with Political Significance

This was a fairly late development; only one case is reported from the fifth century (an image that has miraculously appeared in 347 AD and is stored in the Changsha monastery at Jingzhou in 470 is crying; shortly afterwards the Song emperor dies, and the dynasty goes down in chaos and rebellion).[84] The fact that all the other cases are from the sixth century or later is symptomatic of the growing political role of the Buddhist establishment in that period. The portents described are both positive and negative. In 558 AD the movements made by an 'Aśoka-statue' were interpreted as a sign that the Chen emperor's military campaign would be crowned with success, and six years later the same image emitted a radiance by which it foretold the collapse of dangerous rebel forces in the south.[85] It repeated that sign in 618 AD, announcing the victory of the Tang.[86]

In other cases the portenta are ominous; the 'signals' mostly consist of weeping and sweating. Under the Tuoba-Wei a gilded image outside the gate of the Pingdeng 平等 Monastery at Luoyang 'continually manifested supernatural signs, foretelling the good and evil things affecting the empire'. Thus in 527 it prophesied the terrible destruction wrought by the rebel Erzhu Rong 爾朱榮 by weeping for three days (soaking countless napkins 'for everybody to see'; a monk had been placed at the side of it to wipe off the tears), and in 529 it started sweating profusely, a miracle that again attracted large crowds from the capital and the suburbs, and that three months later was followed by an invasion and the flight of emperor Zhuang.[87]

The political use of icons, relics and other 'auspicious objects' reached its climax in Sui and early Tang times, when elements of the *cakravartin*

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84 T 2106 (cf. note 82), j. 2, p. 425c; Soper 1959, 24.

85 *Ib.*, p. 414a; Soper 1959, 11.

86 *Ib.*; this and the preceding portent were given by the famous statue that was said to have been discovered on the bottom of the river near Nanjing. In Daoxuan's time (mid 7th century) it was kept by the famous Da Xingshan si, and many painted copies were made of it.

87 T 2097 *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 by Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之 (mid-sixth century), j. 2, p. 1007c; Soper 1959, 104–105, Jenner 1981, 193; Wang Yi-t'ung 1984, 98.

lore were incorporated into the state ideology and used to reinforce the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty. Thus, after the first Sui emperor (Wendi, r. 581/589–604 AD), following Aśoka's example, had ordered the establishment of forty-four shrines all over the empire, an incredible number of 'spiritual manifestations' were reported to the throne. The reports that have been preserved[88] speak about the spontaneous appearance or 'discovery' of bronze or stone statues, reliquaries containing relics or images, and individual relics in or near these shrines; the appearance of traditional Chinese portents (such as inscribed stones and auspicious animals) at the same occasion shows to what degree the operation was based upon a mixture of Buddhist and indigenous Chinese ideas.

Half a century later the famous *Vinaya*-master Daoxuan 道宣 (596–669 AD) published two 'surveys of miraculous happenings' devoted to many dozens of cases: famous sites, numinous images and tales about their supernatural manifestations.[89] Both treatises were published in 664 AD and their impact is attested by the fact that much of their contents was incorporated by Daoshi 道世 into his huge Buddhist encyclopaedia, the *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林, which appeared only four years later.[90]

We may conclude that in addition to its other uses which were part of the Indian and Central Asian heritage, in China the function of the icon as a sacred object endowed with magical potency acquired special importance. The magical potency of the image (in most cases a statue or reliquary rather than a painting) could be directed towards different ends: the conferment of blessings in this life and in the hereafter, protection against danger, and—in its role of portentous object—the production of warning or encouraging signs. As a source of 'good luck' it could exert its influence at various levels: the monastery itself, the individual devotee and his family, the local community, and the state. At some occasions—notably on the Buddha's birthday on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month—a kind of 'temple exhibitions' were organised during which all the images, relics and other treasures were displayed, and they were carried around the city in a festive procession. Both the exhibitions and the parade had their worldly or even touristic aspects (they were enlivened by music and dance, acrobatic performances, the display of ingenious automatons and other forms of entertainment), but basically

[88] T 2103 (cf. note 82), j. 17, pp. 213–221a.
[89] Daoxuan's fairly factual T 2106 and his far more fantastic T 2107 (cf. note 82).
[90] T 2122, *Fayuan zhulin*, esp. j. 13, and 14.

it remained a *lustratio*, performed for the blessing of the community. The festive display of images, which had its roots in Indian and Central Asian Buddhism, became extremely popular, and sometimes reached excessive proportions: according to an eye-witness, more than a thousand statues were carried through the streets of Luoyang in the early sixth century,[91] one of which was a thirty feet high gilded statue carried by a hundred imperial guardsmen. We can understand why Confucian moralists frowned upon such shows, in which, according to the same author, the huge statue representing Śākyamuni riding a six-tusked elephant was preceded by lions and gryphons, and flanked by sword-swallowers and fire-belchers prancing about, and by acrobats climbing flagpoles and rope-walking.[92] But we would rather sympathise with a foreign monk from the west who, when seeing this grand display of images, exclaimed 'This surely is a Buddha-land!'.

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[91] T 2092 (cf. note 86), j. 3, p. 1010b; Jenner 1981, 208, Wang Yi-t'ung 1984, 126–127.

[92] *Ib.*, j. 1, p. 1002c; Jenner 1981, 165, Wang Yi-t'ung 1984, 46.

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VERNACULAR ELEMENTS IN EARLY BUDDHIST TEXTS: AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE THE OPTIMAL SOURCE MATERIALS

This paper does not deal with one particular text but rather with a method to be applied in order to define, within the huge mass of early medieval Chinese Buddhist texts, those materials that are most suited to the purpose of this conference, i.e. those materials from which we may expect to reap the richest harvest of early vernacularisms.

The first step to be taken is to set a lower limit in time for the texts to be included in our corpus. I propose to put that lower limit around 410 CE, i.e. the approximate date of the death of the famous Kuchean master Kumārajīva at Chang'an (actually the exact date is still disputed; Kumārajīva either died in 409 or 413 CE). The main reason for doing so is that one of the main contributions of Kumārajīva and his school lies in the fact that they have set a standard for later translators; they have created a characteristic type of Buddhist written Chinese that was soon afterwards adopted by all other translators of the early medieval period, as a kind of written "church-language". In other words: they created a medium that, by becoming petrified, no longer absorbed new elements from the vernacular and that unavoidedly became ever farther removed from the living language. Before Kumārajīva, translators experimented in a variety of styles, ranging from pure *wenyan* to semi-vernacular.

At first sight this definition of our materials in time appears to be an easy task: just take the *Taishō Canon* and see what you find. In actual fact, it is not at all so easy to do so, for the attributions which are found in the *Taishō Canon* are based upon those made in the large catalogues of Tang times that, especially for the earliest periods, are teeming with false ascriptions. As a result, the translations attributed to early masters have multiplied as time went on: in the earliest catalogue the Parthian An Shigao 安世高, who was active about the middle of the second century CE, is credited with 34 works, whereas in Tang times that number has swollen to 176, and many of these later and unreliable attributions are now found in the *Taishō Canon.* In addition, we also have to deal with the problem of anonymous translations, hundreds of which are mentioned in earlier and later bibliographies. In order to be quite sure and rigorous, I have lim-

[2] ited the enquiry to texts mentioned in the earliest bibliography that has been preserved in its entirety, i.e. Sengyou's 僧祐 *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 of 515 CE, with a few additions taken from the roughly contemporary *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, and starting from those data I have listed the texts that have been preserved in the *Canon*. This yields a total of 266 texts in about 850 *juan*. This of course is a staggering amount of written materials; in fact, it amounts to more than twice the size of *Shiji, Hanshu, Hou Han shu*, and *Sanguo zhi* taken together.

Apart from this criterium based upon external bibliographical sources, we can also define our initial corpus on the basis of internal characteristics, i.e. features of style, translation and transcription. We can do so because we can observe certain shifts that can be dated rather accurately. Those shifts were made by almost all known translators—and they took place just around the lower limit of our time-span, i.e. about 400 CE, stretching into the first decades of the fifth century. Some old absolutely stereotyped forms were discarded, and were replaced by equally standardized new forms, and those new forms then became part of the petrified "church language" that I have mentioned before.

By far the most important shift concerns a standard phrase that occurs in practically all scriptures that pretend to contain sermons or statements made by the Buddha himself (hence *the sūtra* and *vinaya* texts), and this phrase is moreover most conspicuous, because it is the opening line of every scripture. I am referring to the well-known formula *Evaṃ mayā śrutam*, "Thus I have heard"—words traditionally attributed to the disciple Ānanda who after the Buddha's passing away is said to have recited all the scriptures by heart.

In Chinese archaic and ancient translations this formula invariably is rendered by *Wen ru shi* 聞如是, "I've heard like this". However, for reasons that are not quite clear (maybe just in order to keep closer to the word-order of the Indian original) it was changed to *Ru shi wo wen* 如是我聞, "Like this I've heard". The new formula for the first time appears in the late fourth century, and no doubt became popularized by Kumārajīva and his school in the first decade of the fifth century. It was immediately taken over by all other major translators; the shift was indeed so general that in the whole *Taishō Canon* I have only found twenty-four "post-Kumārajīva" texts that still open with the *Wen ru shi* formula. It is therefore an excellent internal criterium for defining the *terminus ante quern* for any Chinese scripture.

[3] A second equally consistent and universal shift regards the transcription of the word *Nirvāṇa*, changing from archaic and ancient *nihuan*

泥洹 to the familiar *niepan* 涅槃, and also in this case the shift took place around 400 CE.

Basing our selection also on these internal criteria has the advantage that they are purely formal, and therefore independent from the judgement of early cataloguers. But those criteria are especially important in the case of early anonymous scriptures, many of which are short to very short, rather obscure, written in a popular or even vulgar style—and therefore very valuable for us. The catalogues do contain lists of such texts under the heading *shi yi* 失譯, "translator unknown". However, there is ample evidence that they simply did not know (or overlooked) many such texts, and in all those cases the two formal criteria (*wen ru shi* versus *ru shi wo wen*, and *nihuan* versus *niepan*) become decisive.

We can therefore make a second exercise in order to define the gross list of texts from which we start, by collecting all texts containing those two formulas. This yields a total of nearly 300 texts, in about 900 *juan*, Again: this is a staggering, almost unwieldy mass of materials.

However, only a comparatively small part of it is really useful for the present purpose. In this paper I shall make an attempt to survey these materials, to weed out in successive stages those types of texts that are useless, hardly useful, or only moderately useful, and so to reduce the corpus to what is fully acceptable and, finally, optimal. Some types of texts, as we shall see, can be discarded at once; in other cases we have to do with certain obstructing factors: peculiarities that in various ways distort the vernacular element. I shall treat them one by one like a series of sieves and at every step I shall illustrate the argument by means of a text sample. At the final stage we shall have reached the point when we are able to define our optimal materials, the real nuggets extracted from the ore. At the end of this paper I shall present a few text fragments that in my opinion constitute the nearest we can get to the early medieval vernacular.

The first type of texts that has to be eliminated from our collection obviously consists of all those works written in a pure or almost pure literary Chinese. In this category we find quite a number of texts, most of which date from the third century. The most important representative of this type of translation is the third-century Sogdian master Kang Senghui 康僧會 who was active at the court of Wu in Nanking, apparently for a
[4] high-class readership. Here we find all the characteristics and trappings of standard *wenyan*, such as the use of rare literary expressions, prosody, obsolete or even archaic particles and, occasionally, even Chinese-type parallelism. Of course, the phenomenon in itself is highly interesting in social terms, but that does not concern us here and now. The following

text fragment is a typical example of this pure, sophisticated literary style; it consists of a few lines from a "birth-story", one of the many translated by Kang Senghui.

> T 152 *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經; collection of *jātakas* translated by Kang Senghui 康僧會, mid-third cent.
> j. 6 (nr. 70), 37b.

The future Buddha and his brother (also a Bodhisattva) have sacrificed their lives in order to free a country from the power of an evil *nāga* (*long* 龍).

> 諸天稱善靡不歎仁。兩菩薩終生第四天上。一國全命。抱屍哀* 號曰。斯必* 神矣。孰仁若茲。門徒尋之。覩師普慈殺身濟眾。哀慟稱德。各又進行宣師道化。王逮臣民始知有佛。率土僉曰。佛之仁化乃至於茲乎。殯葬二屍。舉國哀慟。
>
> var.: 神 = 天 (三); 號 = 皐 (三)
>
> The gods praised them, and without exception they admired their love. After the two Bodhisattvas had died they were reborn in the Fourth Heaven. As [the people of the] whole country had been saved from death [by their self-sacrifice], they embraced the corpses and wailed mournfully, saying; "These must have been divine beings! Who [else] would be so loving?" Their [= the two Bodhisattvas':] disciples [had gone out] to search for them, and when they saw how their masters in their universal compassion had killed themselves to rescue the people, they [likewise] mourned for them and praised their virtue. And again they all went on to proclaim how their masters [had realized] the transforming power of the Way. Only then the king as well as his ministers and subjects knew that there was [the way of] the Buddha, and within his whole territory all said: 'Does the transforming power of the Buddhas really go as far as that?' They buried the two corpses, and the whole country mourned for them.

Wenyan elements: negative *mi* 靡; direct speech introduced by *yue* 曰; demonstratives *si* 斯 and *zi* 茲; perfective *yi* 矣; interrogative *shu* 孰 *dai* 逮 in the sense of *ji* 及 "as well as"; 率 "all, all-over"; *xian* 僉 "all"; *juguo* 舉國 "the whole country".

[5] A second type of texts that should not be included consists of "*wenyan*-izing" versions, sometimes made on the basis of already existing less sophisticated translations; it is what in Chinese is called *run* 潤 or *run se* 潤色, "polishing". Some early translators are known especially to have indulged in that kind of literary reworking, most of all the mid-third century Zhi Qian 支謙 (of Indoscythian descent, but completely sinicized). The process of "polishing" most clearly appears in those cases in which

both the earlier crude translation and Zhi Qian's "*wenyan*ized" version have been preserved, because there we see the polisher at work and we can note in detail the changes made. The process is clearly illustrated by the following two samples: two versions of a fragment from the story of the Bodhisattva Sadapramdita in two translations of the *Aṣṭasăhasrikă-prajñāpāramitā*.

(a) Semi-vernacular style, trsl. Lokakṣema, 2nd half second cent. CE; T 225 道行經;
(b) Semi-*wenyan* style, trsl. Zhi Qian 支謙, mid-third cent. CE; T 226 *Da mingdu jing* 大明度經, j. 6, 505a.

S. meets the daughter of a rich house-holder who wants to join him in visiting the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata; she first wants to take leave of her parents.

Lokakṣema

是時長者女語薩陀波倫菩薩言。共歸至我父母所。索金銀珍寶琦物。并報父母去。薩陀波倫菩薩卽隨至父母舍。女歸以具爲父母說是事。父母卽報女言。汝所說甚快難得聞。我亦復欲與汝共行。自惟年老不能自行。汝所欲得便自說。女言。我欲得金銀珍寶琦物。父母言。女自恣取之。

var.: (Lokakṣema) 是 = 一 (聖); 報 = 辭 (元、明);
汝 = 如汝 (元、明); 共 = 借 (聖); 女 = 汝 (元、明).

(Zhi Qian) 女具陳之 = 具陳之 (明、聖).

Zhi Qian

長者女語普慈言。願見吾親索寶辭去。闓士覩彼女親。女具陳之。親曰。甚善吾亦有志。傷年西垂體違心願矣。若欲所得便自說之。女言我欲得珍寶琦物。父母言。自恣取之。

[6] (Lok.):

At that time the householder's daughter said to the Bodhisattva Sadaprarudita: 'Go with me to my parents' place to ask them for gold, silver, jewels and costly things, and also in order to take leave of my parents'. The Bodh. S. then followed her to her parents' home. When the girl had come home (read 已 for 以), she told whole story to her parents. Her parents then answered her, saying. 'What you tell us is a very happy [tiding]; it's hard to hear about [such a thing]. We too would have liked to go with you, but we think we are [too] old, [so] we cannot go ourselves. If there's something you want to have, just say so [for] yourself'. The girl said: 'I want to have gold, silver,

jewels and costly things'. Her parents said: 'Take them, as much as you want!'

Note the following changes:

我父母 → 吾親;
索金 . . . . . . 琦物、并報(v. 辭)父母去 → 索寶辭去;
具爲父母說是事 → 具陳之;
言 → 曰;
我亦復欲與汝共行 → 吾亦有志;
自惟年老 → 傷年西垂;
— → . . . 矣。

The third kind of written language that we definitely cannot use here is what I somewhat unceremoniously would call "translationese", i.e. texts in which the Chinese is utterly distorted by an attempt to remain as close as possible to the non-Chinese original and which in the most extreme (but by no means rare) cases are only intelligible—at least to modern scholars—if one has the Indian original at one's disposal. Our corpus contains many such texts. They generally contain very few cases of vernacularism, apart from some very common expressions like *yunhe* 云何 for "how", or *heyi gu* 何以故 for "why". At the lexical level the texts are teeming with technical neologisms, mainly compounds such as *fadeng ju* 法等聚, "complex of *dharmas*", and many Chinese words are used in an atypical, technical sense such as *yin* 陰 for *skandha.* We find this kind of deformed Chinese not only in purely scholastic texts of the *Abhidharma* type but also in a great number of *sūtras* devoted to a systematic exposition of the doctrine. As a phenomenon in itself the use of such extremely artificial meta-language is of course very interesting, but for the present purpose such texts obviously have to be excluded. Let us just have
[7] a look at a small sample: a small fragment from section 2, *Xing pin* 行品 "On [mental] Formations", of T 1550 *Apitan xin lun* 阿毘曇心論 (810b–c), the *Abhidharma-ḥrdaya-śāstra,* a scholastic compendium translated by Gautama Saṅghadeva, 391 CE.

Every (momentary) thought (*xin* 心, *citta*) is a compound. Conscious thought as such does not produce a mental image; in order to do so it needs a number of "concomitant factors" (*ju* 俱) such as an object (*yuan* 緣), time (*shi* 時), perception (*xiang* 想), attachment (*yu* 欲), contact (*gengle* 更樂) and discernment (hui 慧), memory (*nian* 念), reflexion (思), non-obstruction (*jietuo* 解脫), attention (*zuo yi* 作意), concentration (*sanmoti* 三摩提, *samādhi*) and sensation (*tong* 痛).

The argument is first presented, in an extremely terse and concentrated form, in four five-syllable mnemonic verse, after which it is explained in prose.

如心由伴生。今當說
若心有所起 是心必有俱
心數法等聚 及不相應行
心者意。意者識。實同而異名。此心若依若緣若時起。彼心共俱心數法等聚生。問何者心數法等聚。答
想欲更樂慧 念思及解脫
作意於境界 三摩提與痛
想者事立時隨其像貌受。欲者受緣時欲受。更樂者。心依緣和合不相離。

We shall now explain how thought arises from association.
When thought is activated by something
that thought needs to have [mental] concomitants;
the complex of [indispensable] *dharmas* of discursive thought
[8] 'as well as the not [necessarily] proportional formations.

Thought' [here] means 'mentation', 'mentation' means 'being conscious [of something]'; these really refer to the same thing under different names. If this thought relies upon [something external], if it fakes an object, if it arises at one moment, then that [whole] complex of [concomitant] mental factors associated with thought will arise.
Question: "What is that complex of mental factors?"
Answer:
Perception, attachment, contact, discernment,
memory, reflexion, as well as non-obstruction,
attention as regards the sense-domain,
concentration and sensation.
'Perception' means that a thing immediately is received according to its physical shape.
'Attachment' means that at the moment of [sensory] reception there is the willingness to receive it.
'Contact' means that the thought relies upon the object, is joined to it, and does not become dissociated from it—".

Fourth: also generally to be excluded are expositions of the doctrine using a standardized, formulaic, and often extremely repetitive style, and this again will lead to a considerable reduction of our corpus. Many scriptures contain such enumerative passages and some scriptures virtually consist of such formulas from beginning to end. The school example is, of course, furnished by the various scriptures of the *Prajñāpāramitā*-, or "Perfection of Wisdom"-class with their almost interminable litany of negation. By way of illustration we may have a look at the following passage from T 221 *Fangguang banruo jing* 放光般若經 (*Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*),

translated by Kumārajīva, early 5th century (fragment from section 44, j. 9, 67b). The text contains an enumeration of the qualities of an advanced Bodhisattva.

[9] 便知有六波羅蜜。知有內外空及有無空。便知有薩云若。以是故名爲珍寶度。名爲般若波羅蜜。於珍寶度中。亦無生者亦無滅者。亦無著者亦無斷者。亦無取者亦無棄者。所以者何，亦無有法有生滅者。有著斷者有取放者。須菩提，般若波羅蜜無有善法亦無惡法。亦無道法亦無俗法。亦無漏不漏亦無有爲法亦無無爲法。

> He then will know the Six Perfections; he knows that there is the Emptiness of internal and external [phenomena] and the Emptiness of Being and Non-being. Then he will know [the true meaning of] Omniscience. That is why it is called Precious Transcendence; why it is called Perfection of Wisdom. In Precious Transcendence there is nothing that arises and nothing that is extinguished; there is none who is attached and none who is detached; none who grasps and none who abandons. Why is that? There is no phenomenon at all that arises or is extinguished; that is [the object of] attachment or detachment; that is grasped or abandoned. Subhūti, in the Perfection of Wisdom there are neither good nor bad phenomena; neither religious nor profane phenomena; neither soiled nor unsoiled; neither active nor non-active phenomena—.

However, at this point we must become somewhat less rigorous. More than ninety percent of the "Perfection of Wisdom" indeed consists of endless enumerations of phenomena that are declared to be void and unreal and such formulas contain little of the stuff we are after. But quite unexpectedly the monotonous enumeration may be interrupted by short illustrative, narrative passages that are written in a lively style and that may contain a wealth of vernacular intrusions, and the last two sections of the early *Prajñāpāramitā* versions are completely atypical and completely narrative. In other words, at this point the selection must no more be focussed upon discarding whole texts or even classes of texts: from now on we must talk in terms of passages or even small fragments of semi-
[10] vernacular that are found in texts. We can conclude already in this stage that our final corpus of optimal materials will not consist of texts but of such passages and fragments.

The next distorting factor consists of the effect of versification. As we all know, innumerable early Buddhist texts already from Later Han times onward contain passages written in unrhymed *gāthās*, the length of which may vary from three to seven syllables. To gifted poets this would not present any obstacle because they would be able to preserve the verse form without distorting the language, but the monks who wrote these things were no poets but versifiers turning out their rather monotonous

products by the yard. In their attempt to construct stanzas of the required length they appear often to have distorted the language either by inserting redundant words or syllables or by unnaturally condensing binomes to a single syllable. This tendency is reinforced by another stylistic feature: the interesting fact that the versifiers rather consistently try to place a *caesura* in each line, as in indigenous Chinese poetry, especially in 5– and 7– syllable lines (respectively, after the second and the fourth syllable). The use of the *caesura* is by no means as rigid as in secular poetry, and of course in many cases the regular pattern is disturbed by polysyllabic transcriptions. But the tendency is unmistakable, and this again could easily lead to distortion. Here again we should not discard versified passages as a whole, and it would be unwise to ascribe any unexpected form to this kind of distortion. But in any case such forms cannot be accepted at face value unless they are corroborated by other cases that are found in a prose context. For an example of what *may be* lengthened forms let us look at the following verse (only three of which have an irregular *caesura*, from T 6 *Daban niepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (*Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*), translated by Faxian 法顯; early fifth century (j. 2, p. 205b).

[11] *Gāthās* pronounced by various gods immediately after the Buddha has entered into *Parinirvāṇa*.

爾時大梵天王。卽說偈言
過去與未來 及以今現在
無有諸眾生 不歸無常者
如來天人尊 金剛身堅固
猶不免無常 而況於餘人
一切諸眾生 愛惜保其身
薰餘以香華 不知當毀滅
如來金色身 相好以莊嚴
會亦當棄捨 應入般涅槃
永斷諸煩惱 成一切種智
猶尚不得免 況餘結累者
爾時天帝釋卽說偈言
一切諸行性 實是生滅法
兩足最勝尊 亦復歸於盡
三毒熾然火 恒燒諸眾生
無有大悲雲 誰能雨令滅
爾時阿㝹樓馱。卽說偈言
如來於今日 諸根不搖動
心意會諸法 而棄於此身
恬然絕思慮 亦復無諸受
如燈盡光滅 如來滅亦然

Note the following forms that may be "expletive":

> 反以；諸眾生；而況於餘人；一切諸；
> 猶尚；亦復；棄於此身.

The last disturbing factor which we have to take into account is found in a very great number of Buddhist scriptures: it is the general tendency to break up sentences into prosodic modules according to a consistent four-syllable pattern. The origin of this prosodic feature is not quite clear. Of course, we find it quite regularly in regular mainstream *wenyan* where it often is combined with syntactic and lexical parallelism. It may be that the Buddhist practice was inspired by such secular examples, although the social gap between the high-class literati and the circles in which these texts were produced makes such a direct borrowing not very probable. It may also be that the Buddhist four-syllable pattern had something to do
[12] with the way in which such texts were recited or chanted. But whatever the origin, the fact remains that many Buddhist texts already since Han times show this feature very prominently, sometimes up to ninety percent of the text. Notorious examples of prosodic style are the many texts translated by the late 3rd–early 4th century Dharmarakṣa, and unfortunately almost all texts produced by Kumārajīva are highly prosodic. The problem created by four-syllable prosody is akin to the one created by versification. Here, too, we must take into account the possibility that the language is distorted (either inflated or condensed) by the effort to force it into the Procrustes-bed of the four-syllable pattern. Here again, the effect can be shown most clearly when we have two parallel versions of the same text, the first one being written in a free non-prosodic style and the second one constituting a prosodic reworking. For such an example we again turn to two parallel fragments from the Sadāprarudita episode as found in the translations by Lokakṣema and Zhi Qian (cf. above, no. 2), showing the contrast between Lokakṣema's free narrative style and Zhi Qian's use of prosody.

> T 224, j. 9, 470c–471a; T 225, j. 6, 503c–504a.
>
> In a dream the Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita (= "Ever-weeping") is exhorted by a god to seek the Doctrine; S. is desperate because he does not see any way to do so. His grief is compared to that of a convict whose property is confiscated and who is thrown into prison along with his parents.
>
> Var.: (Lokakṣema) 不得 = 不能得 (三、宮、聖).

	Lokakṣema	Zhi Qian
[13]	覺起卽行求索了不得。其意惆悵不樂。欲得見佛欲得聞經索之了不能得。亦無有菩薩所行法則用是故。甚大愁憂啼哭而行。譬如人有過於大王所。其財產悉沒入縣官。父母及身皆閉在牢獄。其人啼哭愁憂不可言。薩陀波倫菩薩愁憂啼哭如是。	寤卽求之。求之不睹其意惆悵。欲得佛聞大明法。時世無佛。國無闓士所行淨法。是故哀慟。如人有過在國王所。財物悉沒父母及身閉在牢獄。

Lok.:

> As soon as he had woken up he went in search [of the Doctrine], but he could not get it at all. In his mind he became grieved and unhappy: he wanted to be able to meet a Buddha and to listen to the scriptures, but he was not at all able to do so. Also there were not the religious rules practised by the Bodhisattva. For that reason he became deeply grieved, and he wailed as he went along. He was to be compared to a man who has committed an offense at the great king's court: all his property is confiscated by the authorities, and his parents and he himself all locked up in prison; that man will wail, and his grief will be beyond words—in such a way the Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita was grieved and wailing.

We are now approaching the final stage in our quest for the optimal materials. As a result of the successive six steps in eliminating useless and less useful materials, what is left is a core body of texts and passages that are written in a free narrative style, not hampered by the distorting factors that have been mentioned so far. In order to avoid any misunderstanding on this point: I do not flatter myself with the hope that those materials truly represent the early medieval vernacular. The very fact that
[14] the narrative has been written down—in Chinese script—must always have led to some degree of formalization. In China, as in other civilizations, the conscious attempt to reproduce living speech in writing is a rather late phenomenon. At best our texts more or less dimly reflect the vernacular, but considering the other written sources of that period we can say that they do so much more faithfully than any other materials.

There is, however, one more step to take, a last stage of refinement that will bring us as close to the vernacular as we can get. When going through texts of this type I have got the strong impression that even in this free narrative style vernacularisms tend to be more frequent in passages containing direct speech: monologue and dialogue. It is hard to make out to what extent this is due to any conscious effort on the part of the writers. In any case: although the core body as a whole can fruitfully be used for linguistic analysis, special attention should be given to passages representing the *oratio directa*. For that reason the remaining samples given

below have been limited to such passages: I have reproduced, and in most cases also translated, the words spoken by the personages, and I have summarized the connecting narrative, just in order to preserve the original context.

a. T 78 *Doutiao jing* 兜調經, a probably early fourth century anonymous translation of a short scripture from the *Madhyamāgama* (T 26 *Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經; Pāli version in *Majjhima-nikāya* 135, entitled *Cūḷa-kammavibhaṅgasutta*).

Because of his aggressive behaviour the brahmin Doutiao (= Pali "Todeyya") has been reborn as a dog in his own household. His son, named Gu 谷 (= Pali "Cūḷa") is very fond of the dog; he pampers it excessively. One day, when Gu has gone to the market, the Buddha comes at his door and is fiercely barked at by the dog.

[15] 佛卽言。汝平常時舉手言咆今反作狗嚇不知慚愧。

B.: "[In the past] you always used to raise your hands and to scare people by your talk; now again when you are a dog you [still] bark at me, without knowing any remorse!"

The Buddha leaves, and the dog grows sad and listless,
Gu returns and asks his relatives:

問家言。狗何爲如是家言。屬者有一沙門來過。不審何言。狗因走入牀下臥地。食之不食。谷言。沙門向何道去。家言東去。

G.: "Why is the dog like that?"
R.: "There happened to be a monk who came along. I don't know what he has said, but as a result the dog went under the bed and lay down on the floor, and when I [tried to] feed it it wouldn't eat."
G.: "What way did that monk go?"
R.: "To the east."

Gu is furious and goes to the Buddha who is sitting under a tree, talking with his disciples. He sees Gu from afar and says to his disciples:

佛告諸比丘。谷來不至道死者。便墮地獄中。諸比丘問佛。何爲墮地獄中。佛言。是人持惡意來欲害人故。當墮地獄中。谷至佛前因問。屬者何沙門過我門罵我狗。令不食不臥其處。

B.: "Gu is coming! If he does not make it and he dies on the way, then he will go down to hell."
D.: "Why will he go down to hell?"
B.: "That man is coming with a bad intention, because he wants to harm other people. That's why he is bound to go down to hell"

Gu arrives, and standing in front of the Buddha he asks him brusquely:

G.: "Which monk happened to pass along my door and scold my dog, so that it does not eat anymore, and no more lies down at its [proper] place?"

The Buddha tells Gu how he has been barked at, and what he has told the dog.

[16] 谷問佛。是狗於我何等耶。佛言。不須問。聞者令汝不樂。谷言。聽爲我說之。佛言。說者令汝瞋怒。谷言。不敢瞋。願欲聞之。佛言。是汝父兜調也。谷言。我父兜調在世時明經道經不作狗。

G.: "What then is that dog to me?"
B.: "You must not ask me that. If you hear [the story] it will make you unhappy."
G.: "Please tell it to me!"
B.: "If I tell you, it will make you angry."
G.: "I won't dare to be angry. I want to hear it!"
B.: "It's your father Doutiao."
G.: "When my father Doutiao was alive he was well-versed in the Scriptures, so he never (reading 終 instead of 經) [can] be a dog!"

佛言。但坐所知自貢高故作狗耳。汝欲知審是汝父不。還歸於家語狗言。汝審是我父兜調者。當於故器中食。汝審是我父者。當還於故處臥。汝審是我父者。先時所有珍寶藏物當示我處。

B.: "Just sit down. What you [should] know is that only because of his conceit he has become a dog. If you want to know whether he [really] is your father or not, go home and say to the dog: 'If you really are my father Doutiao, you must [again] eat from your own bowl. If you really are my father, you must go back to your old place to lie down. If you really are my father, then you must show me the place where you in your former [life] have [buried] your store of precious things'."

Gu goes home and does as he was told; the dog points with its nose to a spot near the bed and scratches the floor with his paws; at that spot Gu discovers his father's hidden treasure; Gu is overjoyed and returns to the Buddha, and he becomes a devout lay believer.

Note the following features:

– *yan* 言 introducing direct speech; *yue* 曰 and *yun* 云 point to "*wenyan*-izing".
– *ru* 汝 "you"; *er* 爾 and *ruo* 若 only in a *wenyan* context.
– *pingchang* 平常 "normal, common".
– *zuo* 作 as semi-copula "to be" (*zuowei* 作爲 is also attested).
– *zhu* 屬 "just; by accident".
[17] – *laiguo* 來過; a common type of directional compound.
– *hedeng* 何等 "what [kind of]"; extremely common.
– ...*zhe*... 者: "in case that...", "if..." (common, also without introductory *ruo* 若 or *ru* 如).

– *ting* 聽 "please allow me . . ."; *ting wei wo shuo zhi* 聽爲我說之 appears to be a conflation of "allow me to hear it" and "please tell me".
– *yuan yu* 願欲 and *huan gui* 還歸 (or *guihuan*)*:* common compounds.
– *dan zuo* 但坐 "it is only because . . .".

b. T 1435 *Shi song lü* 十誦律 (*Sarvāstivāda-vinaya*, also called. *Yiqueyoubu lü.* 一切有部律, the "Disciplinary Rules of the Sarvāstivāda School"), translated by Kumārajīva, early 5th century.

j. 16, 115b–116a: a "case story" about the circumstances that prompted the Buddha to pronounce the rule that monks are not allowed to travel in female company.

Near Vaiśālī, in a weavers' village, a woman has been beaten up by her husband, and she decides to run away from him, back to her parents' home in Vaiśālī. At that moment she meets a monk who is travelling from Vṛji to Vaiśālī. The woman asks him were he is going.

問言。善人那去。答言。向維耶離。婦言俱去。

W.: "Good man, where are you going?"
M.: "To Vaiśālī."
W.: "Let us go together."
So they do, but when walking close to the woman the monk cannot control his passion; he starts flirting and touching her.
In the meantime the weaver realizes that his wife is missing.

我婦或當走去。

Wv.: "My wife may well have run away".
Finally he thinks:

是婦生在維耶離。必當還歸。

Wv.: "That woman has been bom in Vaiśālī, she surely must have gone home,"
and he indeed finds her walking with the monk; he grabs the monk and scolds him;

[18] 汝比丘法。應將我婦去耶。答言。我不將去。我自向維耶離。汝婦自隨我來。夫言。云何肯直首。

Wv.: "Is that the doctrine of you monks, that you should carry away my wife?"
M.: "I don't take her away—I myself am going to Vaiśālī, and your wife has come with me by herself."
Wv.: "You'd better confess right away!"
As he starts beating and kicking the monk, the woman intercedes:

何以打他。此比丘不將我來。我自向維耶離。夫語婦言。小婢。汝必共作不淨事。

W.: "Why do you beat him? This monk has not carried me away; I myself was going to Vaiśālī."
Wv.: "You little slave! For sure you've been doing dirty things together!"
He again gives the monk a thorough beating and then lets him go. The monk goes to Vaiśālī and tells his story, after which the Buddha proclaims the rule that a monk is not allowed to travel together with a woman.

Var.: 俱=共 (三、宮); 他=他耶 (三、宮); 我自=自 (聖、宮); 婢=婦 (聖)

Note:

- adverb *na* 那 "where?" (to my knowledge not attested as "which?").
- directional compound *zouqu* 走去.
- *huo dang* 或當 . . . "perhaps must"—a curious combination.
- *bidang* 必當 "surely must".
- *jiang . . . qu* 將 . . . 去: split-up directional compound; cf. *jiangqu* 將去 in the monk's answer.
- *sui . . . lai* 隨 . . . . . . 來: another split-up directional compound.
- *yunhe ken zhishou* 云何肯直首 (also in the next story) is somewhat enigmatic; the translation is conjectural.
- *ta* 他: a very early occurrence of the personal pronoun "him" (unless we would take it to mean "other [people]", but that is less probable in this context).

[19] c. Ibid., j. 16, 116a–b: a case story illustrating the rule that monks are not allowed to travel in the company of robbers.

When travelling to Vaiśālī a group of monks have lost their way in the forest. They run into a band of robbers who infest the region. The robber chief interrogates the monks, and after duly warning them allows them to accompany them.

Var.:

我等是賊=我是賊 (三、宮);
濟渡=濟度 (三、宮), 滲渡 (聖);
以失=已失 (三、宮);
邏人問=語 (宮);
汝肯=肯 (聖);
治=所 (三、宮);

不作=不能作 (三、宮);
必是失道—— (三、宮);
汝去=汝 (聖)

比丘那去。答言。向維耶離。賊言。此非維耶離道。諸比丘言。我等亦知非向維耶離道。我等失道故。諸比丘問賊。汝等那去。答言。向維耶離。諸比丘言。我曹與汝等共去。諸賊言。不知我等是賊耶。我等或隨道行。或不隨道行。或從濟渡恒河。或不從濟渡。或由門入。或不由門入。若共我等去者。或得衰惱事。

R.: "Where are you going, monks?"
M.: "To Vaiśālī."
R.: "This is not the way to Vaiśālī!"
M.: "We too know that this is not the way to Vaiśālī.
It's because we have lost our way."
The monks then ask the robber:
M.: "Where are you going?"
R.: "To Vaiśālī."
M.: "Let us go together with you."
R.: "Don't you know that we are robbers? Sometimes we use a ford to cross the Ganges, sometimes we don't; sometimes we enter by a door, sometimes we don't. If you go together with us, you may get into trouble!"

[20] 諸比丘言。我等 以失道有事無事爲當共去。答言。隨意。

M.: "We have already lost our way—trouble or no trouble, we shall have to go with you."
R.: "Do as you like."
As they are crossing the Ganges they are arrested by a patrol; the patrolling soldiers ask the monks:

邏人問諸比丘。汝等亦是賊耶。答言。我等非賊。以失道故。

P.: "Are you also robbers?"
M.: "We are not robbers. It's [just] because we have lost our way."
The patrolling soldiers say:

邏人問。汝肯直首耶。當將詣官治。眾官問言。汝等亦是賊耶。答言。我等非賊。以失道故。

P.: "You'd better confess straight away! We [now] must take you to the magistrate."
After interrogation the magistrate, who is a believer, says:

沙門釋子不作是惡事。必是失道。語比丘言。今放汝去。後莫復與惡人共道行。

Mg.: "Monks, the sons of Śākya, cannot do evil things; they surely have lost their way."
And he berates them:

"I now set you free. [But] hereafter you [must] no more travel with [such] bad people!".

(Stereotyped ending: the case is reported to the Buddha, who proclaims the rule).

Note:

- *na* 那, as in the preceding sample.
- plural forms *wodeng* 我等, *rudeng* 汝等, *wocao* 我曹.
- *ruo ... zhe* 若 ... 者 "if".
- *wei dang gong qu* 爲當共去: "it so happens that ..."?
- *yi shi zei ye* 亦是賊耶: clear case of *shi* as a copula.
- *fang ... qu* 放 ... 去: split-up directional compound.
- *mo* 莫 "don't" (*wu* 勿 only in a *wenyan* context).

d. Ibid. j. 46, 330b–c: a case story illustrating the rule that it is forbidden to ordain a woman without her husband's consent.

A householder's wife runs away from her husband who beats and kicks her; she takes refuge in the convent of a nun whom she knows well, because she used to frequent her home. The husband suspects that she is hiding in the convent.

[21] 我婦將無走去耶。

H.: "Could it be that my wife has run away?"

After having made a search, he thinks:

我婦必往至比丘尼精舍。

"For sure my wife has gone to [that] nun's convent!"

and again:

置使在彼令好調伏。後當將還。

"Let her just stay there; [they will] tame her, and later on I shall take her back."

After a few days the woman says to the nun:

善女何不度我。答言。汝婿尚在。云何度汝。婦言。夫不用我。若須我者。應當自來。亦當遣使。

W.: "Good sister, why don't you ordain me?"
N.: "Your husband is still there, how [can I] ordain you?"
W.: "My husband has no use for me; if he needs me, he must come himself, [or else] he must send somebody,"

The nun then ordains her, The husband is furious:

語婦師言。汝惡比丘尼賊比丘尼。汝破我家。何故破汝家。

H.: "You bad nun! You wicked nun! You have ruined my family!"
N.: "Why [do you say that] I have ruined your family?"

答言。奪我婦作比丘尼。比丘尼言。此是汝婦汝便將去。

H.: "You have taken my wife away and made her a nun!"
N.: "If this is your wife, then you may take her away."
The other householders are indignant"

諸比丘尼自言善好有功德。主不聽便度他婦。如王夫人大臣婦。

HH.: "All those nuns say of themselves that they are good and have [gained] merit, [and yet] without the master's consent they ordain his wife! How about (?) the king's spouse, and the wives of the great ministers?"

Var.: 好 —— (三、宮)

[22] Note:

– *jiang wu . . . ye* 將無 . . . 耶 rhetorical question.
– *wangzhi* 往至: directional compound.
– *ruo . . . zhe* 若 . . . 者 "if".
– *yingdang* 應當 "must".
– *hegu po ru jia* 何故破汝家: direct speech without introductory *yan* 言
– *ci shi ru fu* 此是汝婦: *shi* copula.
– *jiangqu* 將去: directional compound.
– *du tuo fu* 度他婦: here again *tuo fu* also could be interpreted as "another [man's] wife". If *zhu* 主 here specifically refers to the husband of this story, *tuo* must be taken in the sense of "his".

e. T 551 *Modeng nü jing* 摩鄧女經, an anonymous (3rd cent.?) translation of the *Mātaṅgī-sūtra*, in later catalogues attributed to An Shigao 安世高 (mid-2nd cent.).

Ānanda meets a girl, the daughter of the witch Mātangī; she immediately falls in love with him. She goes home and weeps bitterly; Mātangī asks why she is crying.

Var.: 問何字名=隨問名名曰 (元、明)

女言。母欲嫁我者莫與他人。我於水邊見一沙門從我匄水。我問何字名阿難。我得阿難乃嫁。母不得者我不嫁也。

D.: "Mother, if you wish to give me in marriage, don't give me to [any] other man. At the riverside I have met a monk who begged for water from me. I

asked him how he was called; his name was Ānanda. If I get Ānanda then I shall marry, but if you, mother, do not get him [for me] I shall not marry."

> Mātaṅgī soon finds out that Ānanda, being a monk, will not marry anyone. Since she is a witch, she plans to invite Ānanda for a meal and to bewitch him. She tells Ānanda:

母語阿難。我女欲爲卿作妻。阿難言。我持戒不畜妻。復言。我女不得卿爲夫者便自殺。阿難言。我師佛。不得與女人共交通。

M.: "My daughter wants to be your wife, Sir."
A.: "Since I am observing the Rules, I don't keep a wife."
M.: "If my daughter does not get you, Sir, as her husband, she will kill herself!"
A.: "I have the Buddha as my teacher, [so] I cannot have intercourse with women."

> Mātaṅgī goes home and tells her daughter:

[23] 母入語女。阿難不肯爲汝作夫。言其有經道者不得畜婦。女對母啼言。母道所在。母言。天下道。無有能過佛道及阿羅漢道。摩鄧女復言。但爲我閉門戶無令得出。暮自當爲我作夫。

M.: "Ānanda is not willing to be your husband. He says since he [has =] follows the Way of the Scriptures he cannot keep a woman."
D.: "It [now all] depends on your Way, mother!" (= referring to her witchcraft).
M.: "Of [all] the ways in the world there is none that can surpass the Way of the Buddha and the Way of the Arhat."
D.: "You just [magically] close the gate-doors, and don't let him be able to get out. In the evening he is bound to be my husband."

> After Ānanda has arrived, Mātaṅgī closes the doors and casts a spell over Ānanda. She spreads the bed, but Ānanda still is unwilling. She then creates a big fire and says:

汝不爲我女作夫。我擲汝火中。

M.: "If you don't want to be my daughter's husband, I'll throw you into the fire!"

> At that moment the Buddha breaks the spell, and Ānanda can escape. The next day he tells the Buddha about his adventure.

我昨日行匃食。於水邊見一女人我從匃水。我還到佛所。明日有一女人名摩鄧。請我欲得歸飯我。出便牽我。欲持女與我作妻。

A.: "Yesterday, when I was begging for food, I met a girl on the shore, and I begged her for water; [then] I returned to the Buddha's place. The next day there was a woman, named Mātaṅgī, who invited me and wanted me to go to her home for a meal. [But] when I had gone out [and paid her a visit] she forced me, and she wanted to give her daughter to me as my wife."

> [24] The daughter is desperate; she cannot get Ānanda off her mind, and the next day she pursues Ānanda, trailing behind him on his begging round. When Ānanda has returned to the monastery, she keeps waiting at the gate. Finally she leaves in teats, but then the Buddha calls her back and asks her:

佛問汝追逐阿難。何等索。女言。我聞阿難無婦。我又無夫。我欲爲阿難作婦也。佛告女言。阿難沙門無髮。汝有髮。汝寧能剃汝頭髮不。我使阿難爲汝作夫。女言。我能剃頭髮。佛言。歸報汝母。剃頭髮來。

B.: “You are pursuing Ānanda; what do you seek [from him]?”

D.: “I heard that Ānanda has no wife, and I on my part have no husband. I want to be Ānanda’s wife!”

B.: “Ānanda is a monk, without hair. You have [your] hair. Would you be able to shave off your hair? [If you are,] I shall make Ānanda be your husband!”

D.: “I am able to shave off my hair!”

B.: “Go home and tell your mother, and [let her] shave off your hair!”

> The daughter goes home and reports the Buddha’s words to her mother, who is appalled by the proposal.

母言。子我生汝。護汝頭髮。汝何爲欲爲沙門作婦。國中有大豪富家。我自能嫁汝與之。女言。我生死當爲阿難作婦。母言。汝何爲辱我種。女言。母愛我者。當隨我心所喜。

M.: “Child, since I have given birth to you I have protected your hair. Why do you want to be [that] monk’s wife? In the land there are powerful and rich families, and I myself can give you in marriage to [one of] them.”

D.: “In life and death I must be Ānand’s wife!”

M.: “Why do you bring shame upon our caste?”

D.: “Mother, if you love me, you must act in accordance with my heart’s delight.”

[25] Mātaṅgī is weeping, but she still does as she is told and performs the tonsure, after which her daughter returns to the Buddha.

我已剃頭髮。佛言。汝愛阿難。何等。女言。我愛阿難眼。愛阿難鼻。愛阿難口。愛阿難耳。愛阿難聲。愛阿難行步。

D.: “I have shaved off my hair!”

B.: “[Now] what do you love in Ānanda?”

D.: “I love Ānanda’s eyes; I love Ānanda’s nose; I love Ānanda’s mouth; I love Ānanda’s ears; I love Ānanda’s voice; I love Ānanda’s way of walking!”

> The Buddha then explains how the body is impure and disgusting, impermanent, and a source of suffering. Mātaṅgī’s daughter is convinced and she enters the Order.

Note:

– …*zhe* 者: “if…”.
– *mo* 莫 prohibitive: “don’t”.
– …*wo bu jia ye* 我不嫁也: *ye* appears to be a *wenyan* intrusion.
– *bian* 便 ubiquitous for “then”; (*ze* 則) is no doubt *wenyan*.
– *yu*…*gong* 與…共 “together with”.

– *mu dao suo zai* 母道所在: in this context ... *suo zai* in its literal sense; elsewhere it occurs as a curious idiom meaning "where?"
– *wu* 無 as a prohibitive(= *mo* 莫): a *wenyan* intrusion?
– *huandao* 還到: directional compound.
– *chi nü yu wo* 持女與我: *chi* 持 or *chiyong* 持用 as a subordinated preverb "taking ...", like *jiang* 將 in *wenyan* or *ba* 把 in modern *putonghua* (very common).
– *hedeng suo* 何等索 verb—interrogative object inversion.
– *ning* 寧 in a weak sense: sign of a rhetoric question (*wenyan qi* 豈).
– *ti toufa lai* 剃頭髮來: note the exhortative ... *lai*, "come on and ...".

[26] f. T 526 *Zhangzhe zi Zhi jing* 長者子制經, "The Scripture of the Householder's Son Zhi (= Jeta?)"; an early (4th cent.?) anonymous translation, falsely attributed to An Shigao.

A sixteen year old boy, the son of a rich citizen of Rājagṛha, is deeply impressed by the Buddha; when one day the Buddha on his begging-round stands at the gate of his mansion, Zhi implores his mother to give him some food, but his mother refuses to do so.

我見一人來。大端正絕妙天下無有輩。我生以來未曾見人如是。今在門住欲乞匃。

Z.: "I see a man coming who is very beautiful and quite wonderful; he has no equal in the world. Since my birth I have never seen a man like him. He is now standing at the gate, begging [for food]."

The mother is niggardly and refuses to give him anything.

母當哀用我故匃與是人。與是人者如病者得良醫。制復言。與是人者名字達於天上天下。是人今續在外住。

Z.: "Mother, have pity! For my sake, give something to that man! One who gives something to that man is like a patient who has found a good doctor."

"One who gives something to that man will be famous in heaven and under heaven. Now that man is still standing outside."

[27] 汝嬈我不止者。汝令我煩亂。
是人不用是乞匃故來。但欲欺調汝耳。今汝小癡兒當何等知。汝所索不止者。會得我捶杖乃止耳。

M.: "If you don't stop harassing me, you'll drive me crazy! That man does not come [here] for that, for begging, he just wants to cheat you. Now you are a foolish child; what do you know? If you don't stop asking, it may well happen that you'll get a [sound] beating with a stick—only then you'll stop!"

母不肯匃與者。自持我今日飯分來。我寧一日不食。哀我疾持來。我欲與是人。恐是人棄我去。是人棄我去是人難值。

Z.: "Mother, if you don't want to give him something, then take my today's portion of rice [and give it to him]. I'd rather not eat for a whole day. Have pity and fetch it quickly! I want to give it to that man, and I am afraid that that man will abandon me. If that man abandons me, [I realize that] it is hard to meet him [again]."

The boy finally fetches his portion of rice himself, as well as his finest clothes, and he goes to offer them to the Buddha, expressing his wish to enter the Bodhisattva career.

Var.: 以來=已來 (三); 哀用=用哀 (三、宮)

Note:

- *mu dang ai, yong wo gu* ... 母當哀，用我故: this reading is to be preferred, although it only occurs in the Korean recension (cf. the variant readings). *yong ... gu* "because of" is very common.
- *buyong shi qigai gu lai* 不用是乞匃故來 is somewhat enigmatic; it either is a contamination of *buyong shi gu lai* and *buyong qigai gu lai* (as in my translation), or *shi* defines *qigai*: "does not come because of that begging".
- *hedeng zhi* 何等知: metathesis of verb and interrogative object.
- ... *lai* 來 adhortative postverb: "come on, and ...".
- *qi ... qu* 棄 ... 去: split-up directional compound.

[28] *List of Early (± 150–± 410 CE) Texts in "Free Style"*

C = 出三藏記集; D = 道安; G = 高僧傳; "w.r.s." = "問如是".

Taishō vol.	No.	Title and attribution in *Taishō Canon*	*juan*	Earliest reference; criterium for selection
I	5	佛般泥洹經; 帛法祖	2	聞如是 (="*w.r.s.*")
	6	般泥洹經; anon. W. Jin (cf. 7: *wenyan* version)	2	"w.r.s."
	16	尸迦羅越六方禮經; 安世高	1	"w.r.s."
	17	善生子經; 支法度	1	"w.r.s."
	21	梵綱六十二見經; 支謙	1	"w.r.s."
	23	大樓炭經; 法立 and 法炬	4	D
	27	七智經; 支謙	1	"w.r.s."
	29	鹹水喻經; anon. W. Jin	1	D

Table (*cont.*)

	Taishō vol.	No.	Title and attribution in Taishō Canon	*juan*	Earliest reference; criterium for selection
		33	恒水經; 法炬 (cf. 34 and 35: *wenyan* version)	1	“w.r.s.”
		42	鐵城泥犁經; Dharmaratna (cf. 43: *wenyan* version)	1	“w.r.s.”
		47	離睡經; Dharmarakṣa	1	C (“anon.”)
		48	是法非法經; 安世高	1	D
		49	求欲經; 法炬	1	C
		51	梵志計水浄經; anon. W. Jin	1	C
		53	苦陰經; anon. Han		“w.r.s.”
		55	苦陰因事經; 法炬	1	“w.r.s.”
		56	樂想經; Dharmarakṣa	1	“w.r.s.”
		58	阿耨風經; Dharmarakṣa		“w.r.s.”
		64	瞻婆比丘經; 法炬	1	“w.r.s.”
		66	魔嬈亂經; anon. Han (cf. 67 *wenyan* version)	1	C
		68	賴吒和羅經; 支謙		D
		70	數經; 法炬	1	C (“anon.”)
		71	梵志頞波羅延問種尊經; Dharmaratna	1	“w.r.s.”
		72	三歸五戒慈心厭離功德經; anon. W. Jin	1	“w.r.s.”
[29]		76	梵摩渝經; 支謙	1	D
		78	兜調經; anon. W. Jin	1	D
		86	泥犁經; Dharmarakṣa	1	C (“anon.”)
		91	婆羅門子命終愛念不離經; 安世高	1	“w.r.s.”
		92	十支居士八城人經; 安世高	1	“w.r.s.”
		94	箭喻經; anon. W. Jin	1	C
	II				
		101	雜阿含經; anon., Three Kingdom Period.	1	C
		113	難提釋經; 法炬	1	C (“anon.”)
		115	馬有八態譬人經; 支曜	1	“w.r.s.”
		119	鴦崛髻經; 法炬	1	C (“anon.”)
		128	須摩提女經; 支謙	1	“w.r.s.”
		129	三摩竭經; 竺律炎	1	“w.r.s.”
		131	婆羅門避死經; 安世高	1	“w.r.s.”
		144	大愛道般泥洹經; 帛法祖	1	“w.r.s.”
		146	舍衛國王夢見十事經; anon. W. Jin (cf. 147: *wenyan* version)	1	“w.r.s.”

Table (*cont.*)

Taishō vol.	No.	Title and attribution in Taishō Canon	*juan*	Earliest reference; criterium for selection
	148	國王不黎先泥十夢經; Dharmaratna	1	"w.r.s."
III				
	178	前世三轉經; 法炬	1	"w.r.s."
IV				
	195	十二游經; Kālodaka	1	C ("anon.")
	198	義足經; 支謙	2	D
	205	雜譬喻經; anon. Han	2	C
	206	舊雜譬喻經; 康僧會	2	G
VIII				
	224	道行般若經; Lokakṣema (cf. 225: *wenyan* version)	10	D
X				
	280	兜沙經; Lokakṣema	1	D
[30]	282	諸菩薩求佛本業經; 聶道真	1	"w.r.s."
XI	310.19	(大寶積經)郁伽長者會; 康僧鎧	1	G
	313	阿閦佛國經; Lokakṣema	2	D
XII				
	322	法鏡經; 安玄and嚴佛調	1	D
	337	阿闍貰王女阿術達菩薩經; Dharmarakṣa	1	D
	344	太子和休經; anon. W. Jin	1	D
	350	遺日摩尼寶經; Lokakṣema	1	C ("anon.")
	356	寶積三昧文殊師利菩薩問法身經; 安世高	1	"w.r.s."
	361	無量清淨平等覺經; Lokakṣema (cf. 362: *wenyan* version)	4	"w.r.s."
	393	迦葉赴佛般洹槃經; Dharmaratna	1	C ("anon.")
XIII				
	417/418	般舟三昧經; Lokakṣema	1	D
	419	拔陂菩薩經; anon. Han	1	C
XIV				
	457	彌勒來時經; anon. W. Jin	1	C
	458	文殊師問菩薩署經; Lokakṣema	1	D
	483	三曼陀跋陀羅菩薩經; 聶道真	1	"w.r.s."
	504	比丘聽施經; Dharmaratna	1	"w.r.s."
	506	犍陀國王經; 安世高	1	"w.r.s."
	526	長者子制經; 安世高 (cf. 527 *wenyan* version)	1	"w.r.s."

Table (*cont.*)

Taishō vol.	No.	Title and attribution in Taishō Canon	*juan*	Earliest reference; criterium for selection
	528	菩薩逝經; 帛法祖	1	"w.r.s."
	529	阿鳩留經; anon. Han	1	C
	537	越難經; 聶承遠	1	"w.r.s."
	538	呵雕阿那鋡經; Dharmaratna	1	"w.r.s."
	551/552	摩鄧女經; 安世高	1	C ("anon.")
	556	七女經; 支謙	1	D
	561	老母經; anon. E. Jin	1	"w.r.s."
[31]				
XV				
	624	伅真陀羅所問如來三昧經; Lokakṣema	3	D
	626	阿闍世王經; Lokakṣema	2	D
	629	放缽經; anon. W. Jin	1	D
	657	寶如來三昧經; Gītamitra	2	C
XVI				
	692	作佛形像經; anon. Han (cf. 693 *wenyan* version)	1	C
XVII				
	729	分別善惡所起經; 安世高	1	"w.r.s."
	730	處處經; 安世高	1	C ("anon.")
	740	頞多和多耆經; anon. W. Jin	1	D
	760	惟日雜難經; 支謙	1	"w.r.s."
	792	法受塵經; 安世高	1	"w.r.s."
	807	內藏百寶經; Lokakṣema	1	D
XXI				
	1262	鬼子母經; anon. W. Jin	1	D
XXII				
	1428	四分律; Buddhayaśas & 竺佛念	60	C
XXIII	1435	十誦律; Puṇyatara & Kumārajīva	61	C
total corpus: 86 texts = 227 *juan*				

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BUDDHISM ACROSS BOUNDARIES: THE FOREIGN INPUT

I. *Introductory Remarks*

The theme "Buddhism Across Boundaries" can be interpreted in different ways. In the case of China, it could be understood as referring to "what happened to Buddhism after its introduction into China." If taken in that sense it would encompass the whole immensely complicated process of adaptation, incorporation and digestion to which the foreign creed was subjected, in particular during the formative phase, from the middle of the first to the late sixth century CE. On the other hand, it can also be taken in a more literal sense, concentrating upon the "border-crossing" process itself, which is the approach chosen for this paper. Its focus is not upon indigenous transformation but upon those who provided the raw materials: the foreign masters who in early medieval times were active at several Buddhist centres in China. It is based upon an analysis of the available data concerning about one hundred individuals of foreign origin who during that period were engaged in the spread of Buddhism. The group is fairly well-defined by two shared characteristics: the individuals
[2] are foreigners (either coming in from abroad or resident in China) and in more than 90% of the cases they have clerical status. Within those parameters there is a great diversity as to geographical origin, specialization, social status, and degree of adaptation to the Chinese environment. To few of them—the most illustrious ones, about whom much information is available—specialized studies have been devoted, but to my knowledge the phenomenon of the "foreign master" as an essential element in early Chinese Buddhism has never been made the object of prosopographical research. The present paper cannot be more than a first step towards a more adequate treatment of the subject. Some conclusions can be drawn from the available data, but taken as a whole the information is one-sided and fragmentary, and some of the most basic questions remain unanswered. This will become clear by having a critical look at our source materials.

II. *The Sources: Limitations and Distortions*

Perhaps the most serious limitation inherent in our source materials lies in the fact that they almost exclusively deal with one group: the foreign masters who were engaged in the translation of Buddhist texts, an activity which—understandably—was regarded as their major contribution. Since the sequence of the sections in the collected monks' biographies (*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 and *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳) clearly reflect a hierarchical order, it is significant that the very first section is devoted to the "translators," and it is in these chapters that almost all available biographical information concerning foreign missionaries is concentrated. A forteriori this is true for the bibliographical sources (*Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 and later catalogues) which naturally are only concerned with foreigners who were involved in the production of texts. This of course results in a seriously distorted and one-sided picture. In contemporary texts, both Buddhist and secular, we find many tantalizingly vague references to nameless, nondescript *huseng* 胡僧 foreign monks" who appear upon the scene in different roles: as priests patronized by an imperial prince, as clerics living in a metropolitan monastery, as experts authenticating *soidisant* "relics of Aśoka" excavated in China, and as magicians and healers. A few "not translation-related" foreign monks had achieved such fame that they have their (largely hagiographical) biographies in our sources, but such cases are extremely rare—only five of them figure in the *Gaoseng zhuan*.

However, the situation is even worse: the bulk of the information is primarily concerned with a select group of "high-class translators," those who were patronized by the secular elite and who were active at a few—often metropolitan and court-sponsored—monasteries. This selection is
[3] in keeping with the general orientation of Buddhist biographical sources that show a strong propagandistic tendency: they were written to demonstrate the "respectability" of the *saṅgha*, and therefore tended to focus upon the foreign masters' relations with the court and the aristocratic elite. As we shall see, there is every reason to assume that even within the field of translation work many more foreigners must have been active—obscure monks or *upāsakas* producing primitive texts with limited circulation.

In other words, the picture conforms to that of early Chinese Buddhism as a whole: we are fairly well-informed about some corners of the tiny tip of an iceberg; about the submerged body we can only speculate on the basis of stray bits of information, circumstantial evidence, and the archaeological record.

III. *The Diffusion of Buddhism: Some General Features*

In this section, which only serves to place the subject in its larger context, four aspects may be very briefly mentioned: the missionary ideal; the basic patterns of diffusion; the consequences of royal/imperial patronage; and the spread of Buddhism at various social levels, as a stratified process.

There can be no doubt that from the earliest times Buddhism has been a missionary religion par excellence. The missionary ideal has its scriptural foundation in the *Vinaya* account reporting the words spoken by the Buddha himself when he sent out his first sixty disciples, shortly after the first sermon at Benares, to "go forth, for the benefit of many . . ., let not two of you follow the same road, and preach the *dharma* which is beneficial from beginning to end,"[1] and it is reflected by later pious stories about the exploits of arhats converting many regions in India and beyond.[2] Nor can it be doubted that since early times—in any case since the formation of "canonical Buddhism"—this missionary activity was accompanied by the propagation of texts, both orally and, later, in writing.

For our purpose it is important to note that this diffusion of Buddhist texts was not coupled with the preference—let alone prescription—of any "sacred language." On the contrary, possibly as a reaction to the exclusive
[4] use of Sanskrit in the Brahminical tradition, in a much-debated *Vinaya* passage the Buddha is said to have explicitly permitted to preach the Law "in one's own tongue" (*sakāya niruttiyā*, variously rendered in Chinese by *guoyin* 國音 "the [speech-]sounds of the country" and *guo su yanyin* 國俗言音" the common speech-sounds of a country").[3] In its original context this obviously referred to closely interrelated regional languages or dialects, and eventually also to Sanskrit. However, it is an important fact that the translation of texts as a corollary to the propagation of Buddhism was fully accepted and practised long before Buddhism spread beyond the

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[1] Hermann Oldenberg, ed. *Vinaya Piṭakaṃ: One of the Principle Buddhist Holy Scriptures in the Pâli Language*, vol. I: *The Mahāvagga* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1881), 21; T. W. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg, trans., *Vinaya Texts* I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), 112; I. B. Horner, trans. *The Book of Discipline*, vol. IV, *Mahāvagga* (London: Pali Text Society, 1951), 28; T 1421 (*Mahīśāsaka-vinaya*) j. 16, 108a; T 1428 (*Dharmaguptaka-vinaya*) j. 32, 792a; André Bareau, *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha dans les Sūtrapiṭaka et Vinayapiṭaka anciens* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1963), vol. I, 243.

[2] Cf. the exploits of Ānanda's disciple Madhyāntika in the northwest, of Mahendra in Sri Lanka, of Mahākatyāyana in Mathurā, of Gavāmpati in Burma, of the "500 arhats" in Kashmir, etc.

[3] Cf. Étienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme indien des origines à l'ère Śaka*, Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 14 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1958), 610–614.

Indian subcontinent. Of course the permission to use "one's own tongue" did not preclude the use of a *lingua franca*. There is not yet any evidence of Buddhist texts translated into any of the many languages of the northern parts of the Kushan empire (Parthian, Bactrian, Sogdian) during the Kushan period, and it seems that in that phase of the Buddhist expansion into western Central Asia the northwestern Prakrit ("Gāndhārī") was used as a standard language. It was a medium still closely related to (hybrid) Sanskrit, which around the same time started being used as a vehicle of expression. Thus, the production of the earliest Buddhist texts in Chinese, around the middle of the second century CE, marks a "linguistic breakthrough" in the spread of the *dharma*: for the first time scriptures had to be translated into a language totally unrelated to any Indian tongue, instead of being "transposed" from one Prakrit to another, or from Prakrit to Sanskrit, a process that allowed for an almost word-by-word transposition without any appreciable loss as regards content and way of expression. As we shall see, this change from transposition to "restatement through translation" was to have far-reaching consequences for the propagation of Buddhism in China.

But however important the role of the production of texts may have been in the diffusion of Buddhism, it does not constitute the heart of the matter. The spread of Buddhism is indissolubly connected with the spread of the *saṅgha* as a well-defined monastic institution. Without that clerical nucleus Buddhism would be reduced to lay devotionalism and lose its institutional base.

In the gradual spread of the *saṅgha* several processes and mechanisms were at work. Apart from the missionary motivation mentioned above, and the remarkable mobility of Buddhist monks as "wandering ascetics," the most basic and continuous process was a mechanism of "contact expansion" that formed part of the monastic life itself. Since the local monastic community was—economically speaking—parasitic, the maximum num-
[5] ber of monks in a given parish (*sīmā*, "begging circuit") was defined by the surplus production of the local lay believers who supported the *saṅgha* by their gifts. If the local monastic community grows—as every successful institution tends to do—surplus monks will wander away, in search of new suitable localities; they will move along the main routes to places where new *dānapati*s are to be found: a prosperous agrarian region, or a big city. In this way a continuous process of outward movement and gradual expansion is set into motion—a process that must have started very early, and that forms the most basic, grass-roots level force behind the spread of Buddhism as a monastic system.

At times, however, that continuous, unguided process of contact expansion is accelerated and modified by a second major factor: "high-level patronage," sponsorship by the elite and in particular by the royal or imperial court. Large-scale patronage of this type has very important consequences, both qualitative and quantitative. In the case of royal protection and sponsorship, Buddhist monachism gets the opportunity to spread all over the ruler's territory (all of India; Sri Lanka and the northwestern periphery in Maurya times; from Afghanistan to the Oxus basin under Kaniṣka), making use of the facilities provided by political unification (a network of highways; a *lingua franca*, a religious policy pursued by the court). But apart from that quantitative aspect, elite and court sponsorship also had a qualitative effect: it created a stratification inside Buddhist monastic life.

Wherever this happens, we note the emergence of a top level of large and richly endowed monasteries, supported by donations in land, serfs and goods: sedentary communities peopled by large numbers of monks (and, to a lesser degree, nuns). In contrast to the huge mass of small monastic communities subsisting on the modest contributions of local donors, these large monasteries become centres of Buddhist learning and culture and monastic estates with important economic functions; they produce a clerical elite, the leaders of which entertain close relations with the court and the top of the royal administration. This social and cultural stratification within the *saṅgha* also has its effects upon geographical distribution. Apart from centres of pilgrimage (which form a very special category), a pre-modern countryside lives just above subsistence level, and can only support small parasitic communities. Wealth and large surpluses are concentrated in the cities, and there the elite monasteries are found. Elite Buddhism with all its activities (most emphatically including high-level literacy and the production of texts) is an urban phenomenon, concentrated in or near the royal capital and other big cities, closely related to trade, artisanate, administration and other sources of wealth. The association of large monasteries with city-life is abundantly attested both by the scriptural tradition and by the archaeological record.

This situation had become fully developed by the time Buddhism started to penetrate into China, with western central Asia as its most
[6] recent region of expansion. By the beginning of the second century CE, Buddhist monasteries could be found all over the Kushan empire: in Afghanistan and Kashmir, in the most prosperous parts of present-day Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, in the Ferghana valley and the upper and middle reaches of the Amu-darya. This was the situation in the western

parts of Central Asia by the time the first missionaries crossed the dry heart of the continent on their way to China: monks from northwestern India and Kashmir (Tianzhu 天竺, Jibin 罽賓) Parthia (Anxi 安息), Sogdiana (Kangju 康居), and, less precisely localized, the country of the Indoscythians (Yuezhi 月支).[4]

It is interesting to note that present-day Xinjiang 新疆 itself appears to have remained a mere transit zone, without monastic settlement, for a very long time. Along the northern and southern branches of the Silk Road the earliest archaeological evidence of the existence of Buddhism dates from ca. 250 CE, about a century later than the establishment of the first Buddhist community in Luoyang, and nearly two centuries later than the first reference to Buddhist monks in a Chinese source. This late date of the rise of monastic Buddhism at centres like Kucha and Khotan—true strongholds of the saṅgha in later times—is confirmed by Chinese Buddhist biographical sources, as will be set forth in more detail below.

In view of what has been said above about the close relation between, on the one hand, sedentary monastic life, and, on the other hand, the availability of surplus wealth concentrated in cities, the conclusion seems warranted that in the first two centuries of our era the oasis states along the Silk Road still were at a low level of economic development. This is confirmed by the archaeological findings that suggest a mixed, hardly urbanized economy and a material culture of semi-nomadic type. A comparison of the demographic data concerning those states in the *Han shu* (漢書 History of the Han [Dynasty], reflecting the situation of the late first century BCE) and the *Hou Han shu* (後漢書 History of the Later Han [Dynasty], reflecting the situation of the mid-second century CE) points to an almost explosive increase of the population in the oasis states, Khotan rising from 3,300 to 32,000 households, and Kashgar from 1,510 to 21,000. Such an unprecedented demographic growth can only be explained as the result of a dramatic increase in agricultural production and other sources of income (notably commerce), which in turn created the conditions
[7] that made monastic Buddhism possible.[5] Around the middle of the third

[4] Since in the earliest sources persons having the ethnic designation Zhi 支) are clearly distinguished from "Indians" (Zhu 竺) and from "Sogdians" (Kang 康), they may have mainly come from the far northwest or the Indian subcontinent, including Gandhāra.

[5] For the demographic development of the oasis states in Han times and its consequences for urbanization and monastic Buddhism cf. my article "Han Buddhism and the Western Region," in W. L. Idema and E. Zürcher, eds., *Thought and Law in Han and Ch'in China: Studies Presented to Anthony Hulsewé on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 158–182.

century CE that process had run its course, as is testified by the earliest Buddhist architectural remains at Loulan and Mirān. Before that time we have the curious situation that the earliest Buddhist missionaries going to China did not come from the oasis states of "Serindia" but all the way from western Central Asia, crossing the immense vacuum of Xinjiang, and settling in China at the other end of it. In other words: in this case the familiar pattern of contact expansion was broken and was replaced by its opposite: long-distance transmission. That fact may account for certain distinctive features in the first phase of Buddhism in China, for premodern long-distance transmission was characterized by incidental and intermittent contact, long and difficult routes of communication, lack of feed-back, and the unsystematic borrowing of elements detached from their original context. All this is typical of what we know of Chinese Buddhism in its embryonic and archaic phases: stray foreign monks, haphazard borrowing, no integral transmission of coherent doctrinal complexes, no regular ordination. It was only in the late third century CE that the situation changed, and that a "second start" was made, and that appears to have been the result of the Buddhist conquest of Serindia that had taken place not long before.

IV. *Early Medieval China as a Mission Field*

Perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of the spread of Buddhism to East Asia is the fact that China, being situated at the terminus of both the transcontinental caravan roads and the maritime route from south and southeast Asia, did not receive the foreign creed from one particular region but from many centres simultaneously. In the early medieval period it received impulses (in terms of missionaries, texts, rituals and artistic traditions) from virtually the whole Buddhist world, altogether some fifteen different regions, ranging from Kashmir to Sri Lanka, and from Samarkand to the Mekong basin. As a result, Chinese Buddhism became a melting pot of different types of Buddhism, a mass of scriptural, disciplinary and scholastic traditions of various provenance that not seldom contradicted each other. That diversity goes back to the very beginning of the "church of Luoyang" in the second century CE, when Hīnayāna scriptures were introduced by the Parthian missionary An Shigao 安世高 and Mahāyāna texts by his younger contemporary, the Indo-scythian Lokakṣema; shortly afterwards Amitābha devotionalism came to complicate the picture. The Vinaya in early Chinese Buddhism was a matter

[8] of bewildering variety: between ca. 250 and 480 CE eleven masters were active in producing disciplinary texts of no less than six different schools.[6] In the second-to-last decade of the fourth century, Gautama Saṅghadeva and others made the Chinese acquainted with the scholastic system of the Sarvāstivādins; twenty years later, Kumārajīva arrived and introduced its Mahāyāna counterpart, the scholastic treatises of the Śūnyavādins, that contradicted it on every point. The earliest Chinese versions of the "Buddha-biography" (ca. 200 CE; a text said to have come from Kapilavastu) describes Śākyamuni's life in concrete and down-to-earth terms,[7] whereas another text, translated around the same time, presents the whole story in purely Lokottaravādin terms, as a phantasmagoria.[8]

Thus the geographical situation naturally led to a bewildering diversity, which in turn forced the Chinese to develop a spirit of eclecticism and syncretism, to accept doctrinal diversity and (seeming) inconsistency as part of the Buddhist message itself, and to transcend those differences by regarding them as "levels of truth" or "successive stages of revelation"—the basic principle of the indigenous Chinese scholasticism that started to take shape by the end of our period.

However, all that clearly belongs to the tiny tip of the iceberg, the elite of scholar-monks. We should not forget what has been said above about the stratified nature of Buddhism and about the deeper layers about which we have very little information. It cannot be doubted that the propagation of Buddhism also went on at those lower strata, carried on by those nondescript *huseng*, "foreign monks" outside the limelight of the elite-sponsored translation teams in the large monasteries.

About the lowest stratum of diffusion—the level at which Buddhist elements were incorporated into Chinese popular religion—very little information can be found in written sources, apart from some stray references to a hybrid Buddho-Daoist cult in Later Han court circles. However, in the course of the last thirty years archaeology has yielded a number of material relics showing how Buddhist themes had become part of the

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6 Apart from the five complete *Vinaya*s that have been preserved in Chinese (T 1421, 1425, 1428, 1435 and 1442–1453) at least the title has been preserved of a partial translation of a Theravāda Discipline (*Tuopili lü* 他毗利律, a title translated as "Discipline of Virtuous Elders," *Sude lü* 俗德律) made by Mahāyāna at Canton around 485 CE (*CSZJJ* j., 13b).

7 T 184 *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經 (trans. Zhu Dali 竺大力 and Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 and T 196 *Zhong benqi jing* 中本起經) (trans. Tanguo 曇果 and Kang Mengxiang), ca. 200 CE.

8 T 807 *Neizang bai bao jing* 內藏百寶經, translated by Lokakṣema (active ca. 170–190 CE).

repertoire of Chinese religious lore in the second and third centuries CE. The artifacts testify of a diffuse and unsystematic adoption of Buddhist elements (the seated Buddha, with and without attendants; the six-tusked elephant; the *śarīra*-relic as an auspicious object) in indigenous beliefs and cults, notably those related to the afterlife, the quest for immortality, and the cult of the Daoist deities Xi wangmu 西王母 and her male counterpart
[9] Dong wanggong 東王公[9] We know nothing about the way in which such Buddhist ideas and visual representations were spread; it may well be that foreign monks were somehow involved in it, but nothing definite can be said about that aspect. We must, however, keep in mind that this kind of diffuse borrowing, often in interaction with religious Daoism, has been going on throughout our period. If foreign monks were involved in spreading such ideas in the deeper layers, they probably did so as an outlandish kind of magicians and faith-healers—the roles in which we encounter them in the "miracle stories" (*zhi guai* 誌怪) of the same period.

At a higher level the textual expression of the doctrine comes into sight. As has been mentioned above, more foreign monks or upāsakas must have been engaged in producing Chinese scriptures than the masters mentioned by name in our sources. It is surely not without reason that in his eyewitness account of Buddhist life at early sixth-century Luoyang Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之 describes how "foreign monks congregated there like spokes coming to a hub; they had come to this happy land with staves in their hands and carrying scriptures on their backs," especially at the huge Yongming 永明 monastery west of the city wall that housed "well over three thousand monks from many countries."[10]

However obscure these foreign monks may have been, an unknown number of them have left their traces in the Chinese scriptural records, in the form of a considerable number of texts that in early catalogues are referred to as *shiyi* 失譯 "Anonymous translations" or *yijing* 異經 "Different [versions of] scriptures." The number of those texts once was quite impressive. When the famous Dao'an 道安 (14–385 CE) compiled his *Zongli zhongjing mulu* 總理眾經目錄 (the earliest preserved bibliography of Buddhist scriptures, completed in 374 CE) he listed no fewer than 317 texts of

9 Cf. Yu Weichao 俞偉超, "Dong Han fojiao tuxiang kao" 東漢佛教圖像考, *Wenwu* 文物 288, no. 5 (May 1980): 68–67, and Wu Hung, "Buddhist Element in Early Chinese Art (second and third centuries BCE)," *Artibus Asiae* 47 (1986): 263–316.

10 T 2092 *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記, trans. W. J. F. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsüan-chih and the Lost Capital (493–534)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 249; trans. Yi-t'ung Wang, *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Loyang* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 204.

that kind, arranged under four headings; “Ancient different [versions of] scriptures” (91 texts); “Anonymous translations” (142); “Different [versions of] scriptures from the Liang territory” (59; *Liang tu* 涼土) referring to the autonomous state of the Former Liang in present-day Gansu, 320–376 CE), and “Different [versions of] scriptures from the [Region within] the Passes” (24; *Guanzhong* 渭河, referring to the ancient metropolitan area in the Wei River 渭河 basin).[11] The total number of anonymous texts men-
[10] tioned by Dao’an (317) is about twice the number of scriptures ascribed by him to specific translators; with a few exceptions they were short texts of only one *juan*, and in many cases the titles are so obscure that they cannot be identified with any known text. From Dao’an’s classification we can conclude that at least two categories, the versions from Liangzhou in the far northwest and from the metropolitan area, apparently had a limited circulation within a certain region.

More than 90% of those anonymous translations have been lost; the *Taishō* canon only contains about thirty scriptures that can confidently be identified as works mentioned by Dao’an.[12] However, those thirty texts constitute a most interesting body of materials, since they allow us a glimpse of Chinese Buddhism at what may be called “sub-elite translation” level at a very early stage of development.

Even a casual reading reveals a number of characteristic features. The texts are generally short or very short, some of them not exceeding 500 characters. The style is mostly popular and narrative; the language varies from simple but pure *wenyan* to a rambling idiom teeming with vernacular elements. The public for which these obscure texts were produced apparently was not interested in scholastic speculations or elaborate schemes of classified phenomena as are found in, for instance, *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. The vast majority consists of free (and sometimes drastically shortened) versions of sūtras taken from the *Āgama*s, or narratives of the *Jātaka* and *Avadāna* type, which suggests a public of lay readers satisfied

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[11] These four sections of Dao’an’s catalogue have been incorporated by Sengyou in his *CSZJJ* (515–518 CE), j. 3, 15b–19c; for a detailed discussion of the bibliographical dates, see Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定, *Go-Kan yori Sō-Sei ni itaru yakkyō sōroku* 後漢より宋齊に至る譯經總錄 (orig. pub. 1938; revised ed. Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai 国書刊行会, 1973), 87–169.

[12] Category “Ancient different versions”: T 529, 805; “Anonymous translations”: T 29, 78, 96, 147, 161, 265, 344, 392, 521, 522, 629, 687, 740, 795, 819, 1212, 2029; “Liang texts”: T 27, 262, 273, 461, 507, 572, 579, 597, 768, 1478; “Guanzhong texts”: T 596, 750. Cf. my article “Obscure Texts on Favourite Topics: Dao’an’s *Anonymous Scriptures*” in Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, ed., *Das andere China: Festschrift für Wolfgang Bauer zum 65. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 161–181.

with simple, edifying stories. The only major Mahāyāna sūtra represented is the *Lotus Sūtra*, but here it is reduced to a shortened version of only one section (section 11, the dramatic appearance of Prabhūtaratna in his jewelled stūpa) which has been made into a complete scripture by adding the conventional opening and closing formulas;[13] another text simply consists of a great number of unrelated statements and moral precepts uttered by the Buddha, a kind of layman's compendium strongly reminiscent of the so-called *Sūtra in Forty-two Sections* (*Sishi'er zhang jing* 四十二章經).[14]

When looking at the subjects treated in those texts we can recognize a number of themes that must have stirred the imagination of Chinese lay believers, such as the moral degeneration of the world and future disasters; relics and miracles; filial piety (as shown by converting one's father); demonology and prophetic dreams. One of the most remarkable features
[11] is the absolute preponderance of Hīnayāna texts; only four out of the seventeen preserved texts of Dao'an's category "Anonymous translations" are distinctively Mahāyāna.

All this seems to confirm the assumption made here, viz., that the "Anonymous translations," about one hundred of which have been preserved in the Canon,[15] form the scriptural expression of a special "layer" in early Chinese Buddhism, a type of Buddhism that is less sophisticated, less scholastic and more laity-oriented than the level represented by the works produced by foreign masters who are known by name. Further research is needed to substantiate that working hypothesis. But in any case there can be no doubt that they are "authentic," i.e., based upon non-Chinese originals, and that they consequently must have been the product of the elusive, nondescript *huseng* who spread the Buddhist message at sub-elite level.

Finally, something should be said about the two most fundamental features of the production of Buddhist scriptures in China: the use of written Chinese as a medium of expression, and of paper as a writing material.

Within the scope of this paper no justice can be done to the vast and complicated subject of the gradual formation and characteristics of the peculiar type of written language that could be called "Buddhist scriptural

13 T 265 *Satan fentuoli jing* 薩曇芬陀利經.

14 T 768 *San hui jing* 三慧經 (one of Dao'an's "texts from Liang").

15 Actually the number of anonymous translations in the *Taishō* canon should be much larger, since the *Taishō* compilers have based their attributions upon the late standard catalogues, which for the earlier periods are notoriously unreliable. Many dozens of texts attributed to early translators actually are listed as anonymous versions in the earliest and most reliable sources.

Chinese."[16] Its origin goes back to the heroic era of the second and early third century CE, a period in which the first translators and translation teams struggled with the problem how to render the Sanskrit and Prakrit originals in a totally unrelated language. It was a time of widely different experiments, ranging from crude attempts at "literal" translation to free paraphrase, and from almost pure *wenyan* to a hybrid idiom half-way between literary Chinese and pure vernacular. In the course of the third century, a more homogeneous scriptural language was taking shape, especially in the many texts produced by Dharmarakṣa (Zhu Fahu 法護) a sinicized Yuezhi from Dunhuang) and his school. Finally, it was Kumārajīva who, aided by a large and very proficient team of scholar-monks, in the first decade of the fifth century created a highly standardized homogeneous scriptural language that was to remain in general use ever afterwards (in
[12] spite of the attempts, made during the early Tang, to replace it by a far more literal and technical kind of "translationese"). These few remarks must suffice as far as the linguistic and stylistic aspects are concerned. Since we are dealing with the spread of Buddhism by means of the written word, another aspect deserves to be mentioned: the way in which the use of written Chinese facilitated the propagation of Buddhism to the most remote corners of the Chinese territory.

By the time when the first Buddhist missionaries settled in Luoyang (An Shigao, ca. 150 CE), central China (Vighna, 224 CE) and the lower Yangzi region (Zhi Qian 支謙 shortly after 220; Kang Senghui 康僧會 in Nanjing, ca. 250), China had already gone through more than four centuries of political unification and (at the elite level) cultural integration, in which the use of a standardized written language had always played a central role. Its use was universal at all levels where literacy was known, from central government offices and court poets to the military administration on the northwestern frontier. In geographical terms it reached from Han outposts in Korea to Confucian studies pursued in present-day northern Vietnam. The unifying and integrating force of the written lingua franca was reinforced by the use of a script that transcended dialectical differences, and that made any written statement readily understandable

[16] For more information about the various types of "scriptural Chinese" that developed side by side in the earliest phase I may refer to my two articles dealing with the linguistic and stylistic features of late Han translations: "Late Han Vernacular Elements in the Earliest Buddhist Translations," in *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association* 12, (1977), 177–203, and "A New Look at the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Texts," in Koichi Shinohara and Gregory Schopen, eds., *From Benares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism, and Chinese Religion in Honour of Prof. Jan Yün-hua* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1991), 277–304.

in any part of the empire. It was so deeply rooted and indispensable that political disintegration and the rule of non-Chinese dynasties of conquest in northern China had no consequences for its position.

All this meant that Buddhist texts, once translated into some kind of written Chinese, at once had a potential area of circulation that was unprecedented in the history of Buddhism. In spite of some stylistic diversity Buddhist texts were understandable all over China, whether they had been translated in Luoyang, Nanjing or Canton; a large text could be partially translated at Chang'an and completed in Nanjing without any discontinuity; as early as the first half of the third century the Chinese Buddhist scholar Mouzi 牟子) writing at present-day Hanoi, freely draws upon a Buddha biography translated shortly before at Luoyang.[17] It is clear that the use of a variety of *wenyan* and of the Chinese script furthered the spread and integration of Buddhism in China, especially among the literate minority. However, it also had some serious drawbacks. Any foreign missionary could reach a fair level in spoken Chinese after two or three years' stay in China, but they could not be expected to become proficient in the scriptural written language, to master the script, and to become familiar with the innumerable standard terms and technical expressions that had been coined by earlier translation teams and had become part
[13] of the Chinese Buddhist vocabulary. As a result, the bulk of the translation work was done by the Chinese participants—the bilingual interpreter who "transmitted the language," *chuanyu* 傳語 (i.e., made an oral translation), someone who "received (the oral translation) by the brush," *bishou* 筆受 (i.e., wrote down a draft Chinese text), and others who "polished" and edited the text. As we shall see, this considerably reduced the part played by the foreign monks in the translation process, and placed the full burden of interpretation upon the shoulders of their collaborators; in many cases the foreigner would not even be able to check the correctness of the translation.

Finally, it may not be superfluous to note the probability that right from the start Buddhist texts were written on paper, which just around that time was taking the place of the more bulky and expensive writing-strips made of wood or bamboo. We cannot be quite sure about this, since it is not corroborated by any positive written or archaeological evidence. On the other hand, the early catalogues and colophons do not contain

[17] In his *Li huo lun* 理惑論 (in T 2102 *Hongming ji* 弘明集 j. 1, 1b–7a) the author extensively quotes from T 185 *Taizi ruiying benqi jing* 太子瑞應本起經 that dates from about 225 CE.

any indication that such texts were ever written on slips, and the size of some of the first translated works (e.g. Lokakṣema's *Daoxing jing* 道行經, produced in 179 CE in ten *juan*, totalling some 24,000 characters)[18] makes it probable that already during the Later Han use was made of that cheap and mass-produced writing material—a factor that, in its own modest way, may have contributed to the production, reproduction and circulation of Buddhist texts.

V. *The Missionaries: Provenance and Antecedents*

In our sources the provenance of about eighty missionaries coming from outside China is mentioned. Apart from the very vague "a man from the Western Region" (*xiyu ren* 西域人), the data concerning geographical origins can be classified as follows:

I. The Indian subcontinent (44 individuals)
- a. Unspecified "India" (18)
- b. "Central India," i.e., Madhyadeśa, in and around the Ganges basin (9)
- c. Kashmir (9)
- d. The northwestern regions: Udyāna and Gandhāra (6)
- e. "Southern India" (2)

II. Western Central Asia (20 individuals)
- a. Indo-scythians (Yuezhi) (10)
- b. Parthia (Anxi) (5)
- [14] c. Sogdiana (Kangju) (5)

III. "Serindia" (7 individuals)
- a. Kucha (6)
- b. Khotan (1)

IV. Southeast Asia (5 individuals)
- a. Funan 扶南 (3)
- b. "Geying" 歌應 (1); "Youpo" 優婆 (1)[19]

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[18] T 224; for the date see the contemporary colophon preserved in *CSZJJ* j., 47c.

[19] The state of Geying has not been identified, but it certainly was situated somewhere in continental Southeast Asia (cf. Wang Yi-t'ung, op. cit., 205, n. 268); Youpo could be a variant form of Shepo 闍婆 "Java" (either the island now called Java or a kingdom on the coast of Sumatra).

This purely quantitative break-down is of course of limited value, since it covers a period of more than four centuries, but it may give a general idea of the diversity of geographical regions from which Buddhism reached China, of the dominant role of India, and of the surprisingly small part played by the oasis kingdoms in present-day Xinjiang.

However, if we consider the time factor, it becomes clear that the part played by certain regions differed widely in successive periods. Very roughly we can distinguish four main phases of propagation, each of which appears to reflect phases of political and cultural development in the centres of diffusion.

Apart from a modest influx from India (only five individuals mentioned), the earliest phase, from the second to the late third century, is characterized by the activity of Indo-scythian, Parthian and Sogdian missionaries, to such an extent that the period from ca. 150 to ca. 270 CE may be called the era of western Central Asian dominance. It clearly coincides with the existence of the Kushan empire.

The next period, from ca. 270 to ca. 380 CE, shows surprisingly little activity as far as foreign missionaries are concerned, apart from the fact that the Serindian centres of Kucha and Khotan come into the picture. It reflects the beginning of a flourishing monastic Buddhism in the oasis states from the early third century.

Around 380 CE there is a sudden influx of prominent missionaries from northern India and especially from Kashmir; it marks the beginning of a period of large-scale input that lasts till the middle of the fifth century. After ca. 450 CE the influx from India continues at a lower rate. The period of maximum activity (ca. 380 to ca. 450 CE) clearly reflects the heyday of Gupta rule in India.

Finally, along with the continuing but less frequent arrivals from India, we note a modest input from various centres in continental Southeast Asia (notably Funan, with its capital on the lower Mekong) from the middle
[15] of the fifth century—a by-product of the indianization of the coastal regions of Southeast Asia that was taking place in the same period.

The propagation of Buddhism was, however, by no means exclusively due to the activities of foreign missionaries coming from afar. A very important role was played by partly or wholly sinicized individuals who came from the border regions of China: Liangzhou (present-day Gansu) with Dunhuang a far western outpost, and, in the south, the region of Jiaozhou 交州 comprising what is now the northern part of Vietnam. Some of the most important early translators and propagators of Buddhism came from those peripheral regions, such as Kang Senghui from Jiaozhou

and Dharmarakṣa from Dunhuang in the third century, and in the fourth century the indefatigable Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 from Liangzhou. There also are cases in which Buddhism was spread by individuals of foreign origin whose families had settled—sometimes even for several generations—in the central parts of China. The pious layman Zhi Qian, a very prolific translator of the third century, came from an Indo-scythian family living in Luoyang; his grandfather may already have been largely sinicized, since he was a colonel in the Chinese army.[20] Another *upāsaka* who took part in the translation of Mahāyāna texts was Zhu Shulan 竺叔蘭, the son of an Indian refugee who around the middle of the third century had settled in present-day Henan together with his wife and two brothers-in-law who both were monks. Zhu Shulan, who was born in China, studied Buddhism with his two uncles.[21]

All such people were bilingual; they were able to translate texts independently, or played an indispensable role in the process of translation as bilingual intermediaries. In addition, they also were well-equipped to interpret and explain the doctrine to a Chinese audience: Kang Senghui was one of the few non-Chinese masters who wrote original exegetical works in Chinese, as did Zhi Qian. That this could lead to sectarianism is attested by the very curious case of a "Sino-Indian" zealot whose original name was something like "Kiṅka" (Jinjia 金加); he was born around 400 CE at Nankang (Jiangxi) as the son of an Indian merchant; afterwards he became a Buddhist monk under the name of Fadu 法度 and a devoted disciple of Dharmayaśas at Chang'an. Dharmayaśas was a prominent *Abhidharma* master from Kashmir, of the Sarvāstivādin school, and this may explain why Fadu afterwards developed into a fanatic Hīnayāna activist, who prohibited the reading of Mahāyāna scriptures and the cult of any other Buddha than Śākyamuni, established his own ritual rules, and acquired a large following, especially among Chinese nuns. It spread to the lower Yangzi region, where it was still very much alive in the early
[16] sixth century, to the dismay of the ecclesiastical leaders in the southern capital.[22] The existence of such a militant Hīnayāna sectarianism in early

[20] *CSZJJ* j. 13, 97b; *GSZ* j. 1, 325a.

[21] *CSZJJ* j. 13, 98b.

[22] *GSZ* j. 1, 329c (appended to the biography of Dharmayaśas); *CSZJJ* j. 5, 40c: "Note about the heterodox ceremonial rules fabricated by the Hīnayānist apostate Zhu Fadu" by Sengyou 僧祐; early sixth century CE, which clearly is the source of the *GSZ* account. It is followed an essay entitled "An Elucidation of (Points of) Doubt (*Yu yi* 喻疑)," in which Kumārajīva's disciple Sengrui 僧叡 (or Huirui 慧叡) defends the Mahāyāna teachings against the attacks of some Chinese opponents.

medieval China is interesting, as is the intriguing fact that it attracted a largely female following, but it also may serve to demonstrate the important role played by such bilingual intermediaries, both as assistants of the foreign masters and in their own right—in commercial terms we might call them the compradores of Buddhism in China.

When we turn to what should be a very important subject—the social background of the missionaries and their activities before they had come to China—the results generally are disappointing. With only two exceptions (Kumārajīva and Guṇavarman), little of historical value is said about the masters' antecedents. The accounts must have been based upon bits of information supplied by the missionary himself, passing through several stages of transmission, in the course of which many plainly legendary elements crept in. Some of those stories may have been told by the master himself, as edifying or self-advertising accounts about miracles performed or witnessed, contacts with superhuman beings and acts of clairvoyance. Some miracle stories unmistakably bear the stamp of traditional Buddhist lore, and they no doubt contributed to the image of the foreign monk as a great magician in popular imagination.

The same holds good for the suspiciously large number of cases of high social status and pedigree: no fewer than six foreign monks are said to have been princes or members of a royal house (three of whom follow the familiar pattern of giving up their accession to the throne in order to join the *saṅgha*), and three masters claim descent from the Śākya clan of the Buddha himself.

We do have some concrete information about religious education and study. Several masters are said to have been well-versed in the arts and sciences belonging to the Vedic tradition, and as far as Buddhism is concerned we may assume that apart from their specific field of specialization they were broadly familiar with the *sūtra*s and religious lore of pious stories and legends. In fact, it is reported that Guṇavṛddhi (active in Nanjing from 479 to 502 CE) was able to recite the *Avadāna-śataka* (T 209, a collection of one hundred pious tales) from memory, since his teacher Saṅghasena had compiled it as a kind of elementary course to be memorized by his junior students.[23]

At a more advanced level the most common fields of specialization mentioned in our sources are the *Āgama*s (collections of scriptures belonging to the Hīnayāna tradition); *Abhidharma* scholastics (mostly of the
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[23] *GSZ* j. 3, 345b.

Sarvāstivādin school of Kashmir), and the Disciplinary Rules (*Vinaya*) of various schools. On the Indian subcontinent Kashmir figures most frequently as a stronghold of Hīnayāna religious study with famous masters teaching the *Abhidharma* and *Vinaya*; in Central Asia Kucha, Khotan and Kashgar are mentioned as places of specialized study. A good example of the way in which a high-level and many-sided Buddhist education was acquired is found in the biography of Kumārajīva (ca. 300–409 var. 413 CE), by far the most illustrious and influential foreign master in early Chinese Buddhism: as a son of an Indian nobleman settled in Kucha and of the ruler's sister he followed his mother as a young boy to Kashmir, where he studied the *Abhidharma* of the Sarvāstivādins and "the sciences"; at the age of twenty he continued his scholastic studies at Kashgar; after his conversion to the Great Vehicle he studied the Mahāyāna scriptures in his native Kucha, along with the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* under the guidance of a master from Kashmir.[24] For each subject there were specialized teachers; in centres of Mahāyāna Buddhism some large texts like the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* were fields of specialization. The effects of this highly developed system of religious study are clearly visible in the Chinese record, for once they had arrived in China, foreign masters naturally tended to concentrate upon texts belonging to the field of their specialization.

Much of the curriculum appears to have consisted of learning by heart: some masters came to China, their memories crammed with stupendous amounts of texts, ready to perform feats of "reciting" (*song* 誦) that baffled even a Chinese audience. After Buddhayaśas from Kashmir (one of Kumārajīva's old teachers) had arrived in Chang'an in 408 CE, he spent three years "reciting" the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* (T 1428) and the *Dīrghāgama* (T 1), a total of eighty-two *juan*; the Chinese translation of the "orally transmitted" version amounts to about 140,000 characters.[25] Recitation from memory had of course the serious drawback that it

[24] *CSZJJ* j. 14, 100b–c; *GSZ* j. 2, 330b–331a.

[25] *CSZJJ* j. 14, 102c; *GSZ* j. 3, 334b. Both accounts contain the interesting story about the Later Qin ruler Yao Xing 姚興 submitting Buddhayaśas to a formidable test in order to verify the latter's mnemonic power: he let him memorize a census register and medical recipes totalling some 50,000 words. Yao Xing was satisfied when Buddhayaśas after two days was able to reproduce the texts from memory without a single mistake. Unfortunately, the story cannot be accepted as historical: Yao Xing's texts were written in Chinese, and since Buddhayaśas had only recently arrived in Chang'an it is very improbable that his knowledge of Chinese was more than rudimentary.

required the physical presence of such a living repository: when in 404 CE the Vinaya master Puṇyatara died half-way through his recitation of the voluminous *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya*, the work of translation had to be interrupted, and it was only thanks to the arrival of Dharmaruci, who also knew the text by heart, that the work could be resumed.[26]

[18] VI. *Coming to China and Settling Down*

In general the sources do not tell us much about the reasons why foreign missionaries went to China. In the earliest period they may just have drifted in, travelling with caravans along the Silk Road, perhaps motivated only by tales about far-away Mahā-Cīna. Once arrived, they settled down in or near a large city, usually the capital, where in most cases there was already a Buddhist community. As long as Buddhism operated below the level of the highest elite (i.e., before the fourth century CE), there is no evidence of foreign monks being "invited" (apart from the case of the so-called embassy of the Han emperor Ming of ca. 65 CE, which since long has been proved to be legendary).

It is only by the end of the fourth century that mention is made of a more specific motivation to go to China, and it may not be fortuitous that it is placed in the context of the presence of Chinese pilgrims in India, the practice of pilgrimage to the holy sites in India having started not long before. Thus we hear how the famous master Buddhabhadra at Nagarahāra met the Chinese pilgrim Zhiyan 智嚴 who was looking for highly qualified Buddhist masters for the China mission. Buddhabhadra was recommended by his *dhyāna* teacher Buddhasena and other authorities, after which he started his journey to China, where he arrived around 409 CE.[27] A similar case of religious head-hunting and recommendation happened much later to an even more illustrious master: in 546 CE Paramārtha was sent to China by the ruler of Magadha, together with many Buddhist texts, at the request of the Chinese envoys that the emperor Wu of Liang had sent to India in quest of Buddhist masters and Mahāyāna scriptures.[28]

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[26] *GSZ* j. 2, 333b (biography of Puṇyatara); ibid., (biography of Dharmaruci); 333c (biography of Vimalākṣa 卑摩羅叉).
[27] *CSZJJ* j. 14, 103c; *GSZ* j. 2, 334c.
[28] *XGSZ* j. 1, 429c.

On the Chinese side, such positive efforts to "get hold of" a prominent master must be viewed in the context of the development of court sponsorship of Buddhism, and in particular the sponsorship (sometimes coupled with censorship) of translation work—a merit-producing activity par excellence. In the last decades of the fourth century we see the beginning of a shift from private, small-scale sponsorship to state-supported translation projects, housed in a few top-class monasteries—a shift that was completed in Sui and Tang times, when virtually all translators worked directly under court sponsorship. In that context, it was only natural that important foreign masters occasionally were invited to come to China, or, if they had already entered the country, to come to the capital.

It should be added that imperial sponsorship of prominent foreign missionaries was not only inspired by the wish to earn karmic merit by promoting the production of sacred texts, but also by less pious consid-
[19] erations. Such masters often were believed to possess supernatural powers and secret knowledge, and there is ample evidence that rulers were eager to make use of their skills. Dao'an's master Fotudeng 佛圖澄, a Kuchean who arrived in China in 310 CE, spent his remaining years as a thaumaturge and soothsayer at the court of the Xiongnu rulers of the Later Zhao.[29] Kumārajīva had to serve Lü Guang, the satrap of Liangzhou, for several years in a similar capacity. After Kumārajīva had been carried away to Lü's court at Guzang as a booty of war, he spent eight years there, predicting the outcome of battles and interpreting signs of nature.[30] The Indian Dharmakṣema was patronized by the ruler of the Northern Liang not only as a great translator but also as an exorcist and a master of magic spells (*dhāraṇī*). Emperor Taiwu of the expanding state of the Tuoba-Wei exerted pressure upon the Liang ruler to send Dharmakṣema to him because of the "miraculous power of his spells"—to which the *Weishu* (魏書 *History of the Wei*) version adds that he did so because of Dharmakṣema's knowledge of sexual techniques (*nannü jiaojie zhi shu* 男女交接之術). But the Liang ruler was firmly resolved to keep such a powerful magician to himself, and as he suspected Dharmakṣema of planning an escape to the enemy, he had him murdered.[31]

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[29] *GSZ* j. 9, 381a–387c; cf. Arthur F. Wright, "Fo-t'u-teng, a Biography," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 11 (1948): 321–371.

[30] *CSZJJ* j. 14, 101a–b; *GSZ* j. 2, 331c–332a.

[31] *CSZJJ* j. 14, 103b; *GSZ* j. 2, 336b–c; *Weishu* j. 99 (biography of Juqu Mengxun 沮渠蒙遜), Zhonghua shuju ed., 2208–2209. The *Weishu* text adds that during his stay at Liangzhou the ruler had Dharmakṣema teach his "method" to his daughters and daughters-in-law in order to ensure numerous male offspring.

The combination of pious sponsorship and keeping the foreign master as a magical protection for the dynasty and the state became a general feature of court Buddhism, first in the north (at Chang'an under the Former Qin, in the last decades of the fourth century), and somewhat later also in the south. The most interesting case of official invitation (or imperial summons) extended by the court at Nanjing to a foreign master concerned Guṇavarman, who at that time (in the second decade of the fifth century) was active as a kind of court chaplain and adviser to a local ruler on Java, and whose fame had spread beyond the borders to China. At the request of two Chinese monks, the Song emperor Wen ordered the governor of Jiaozhou to send a ship to Java; three monks made the voyage to Java carrying imperial letters to Guṇavarman and to the Javanese king. After a stay at Canton the master made the journey to the capital at state expense; at his arrival in Nanjing (431 CE) he was lavishly entertained by Emperor Wen. Apart from his ability to produce sacred texts, Guṇavarman's fame as a man endowed with supernatural powers (he himself claimed to have reached the second stage of holiness, that of
[20] *sakṛdāgāmin*) no doubt also contributed to his status.[32]

It is quite probable that at lower levels of sponsorship (foreign monks being patronized by high officials and members of the aristocracy) the same mixture of devotion, good works and belief in magic efficacy could be found. The sources contain many references to such private sponsoring, but generally very little is said about the benefactors' reasons for doing so.

VII. *Learning Chinese and "Producing" Texts*

As has been mentioned above, learning Chinese, and especially the written scriptural idiom with its huge and ever-growing lexicon of technical expressions, was a difficult and time-consuming task. Foreign monks freshly arrived from abroad could be expected soon to acquire a basic

[32] Before Guṇavaman died in Nanjing (431 CE) he had written a "testament" in Sanskrit verse, which he entrusted to a disciple with the request to send it to India for the edification of Indian monks. It is not known whether this was ever done, but in any case the Song emperor Wen ordered the text to be translated in Chinese, and this version, consisting of 144 Chinese *gāthā*s, has been preserved in *GSZ* j. 3, 341c–342b. In this remarkable document, in which he describes his gradual self-perfection in Hīnayāna terms, Guṇavarman explicitly states when and where he attained the two first "fruits of saintliness": the state of *srota-āpanna* "in the country of Malava," and that of s*akṛdāgāmin* "in Sri Lanka, in a village called Jieboli 劫波利."

working knowledge of Chinese for practical purposes, but it would take them several years to be able to explain the texts that they were reciting (and that were translated by other members of the team), let alone to make a written translation themselves. The problems related to learning Chinese occasionally transpire in contemporary colophons and prefaces. Thus, when Dharmapriya in the late fourth century attempted to make a translation of an extremely technical scholastic text he had soon to stop because of his poor knowledge of Chinese, and the same happened—with the same text!—to Kumārabodhi.[33] There were bilingual intermediaries available, but they apparently simply could not make clear what the text with its terse *kārikā* formulas meant. In another case a solution was found in "long-range planning": when in 407 CE the ruler of the Later Qin found out that Dharmayaśas and Dharmagupta only were able "blindly to recite" (*ansong* 闇誦) a thirty-*juan Abhidharma* text, he ordered them to write out the whole (Indian) text. Only seven years later, "when the *sūtra* masters gradually had become familiar with the language of Qin," he ordered them
[21] to translate the text.[34] Occasionally even Kumārajīva had serious problems with Chinese, in spite of his many years in China before he started translating and his well-attested knowledge of the language.[35]

After going through all the available evidence our conclusions must be somewhat disappointing as regards the actual participation of most foreign missionaries in the translation process. In most cases they just "produced" (*chu* 出) the Indian text by oral recitation. After a prolonged stay in China some of them were able to take part in the actual translation of texts into Chinese, and in two cases we read that one foreign monk assisted another by orally translating (*chuanyu* 傳語) the text recited by his colleague.[36]

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[33] For Dharmapriya's attempt to produce the *Abhidharma-hṛdaya-śāstra* (ca. 382 CE) see *KYSJL*, j. 4., 511a; for Kumārabodhi's attempt, made around the same time, see the anonymous colophon preserved in *CSZJJ* j. 10, 72b. The text finally was translated by Saṅghadeva in 392 CE (T 1550 *Apitan xin lun* 阿毘曇心論).

[34] *CSZJJ* j. 10, 61a (preface to the *Śāriputrābhidharma*).

[35] Cf. Sengzhao's 僧肇 "Introduction to the *Bailun*" (百論序), preserved in *CSZJJ* j. 11, 77b–c), in which he says that Kumārajīva, who liked this text very much, has made a translation of it, by/for himself (*qinyi* 親譯), but he was unable to explain it clearly because "he had not yet become fluent in the local language" (方言未融; *fangyan* referring to Chinese).

[36] Cf. *CSZJJ* j. 10, 73c (Dao'an's preface to the *Vibhāṣā-śāstra* 鞞婆沙論): in 383 CE Buddharakṣa orally translated the Indian text recited by Saṅghabhadra and written down (in Sanskrit) by Zhu Fonian (cf. also *GSZ* j. 1, 328b); the second case is Kumārajīva translating the text of the *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* recited by Puṇyatara and Dharmaruci, cf. above, note 28.

The real problem, however, was not the work of translation, for which the team provided a solution, but that of interpretation and explanation (*jiang* 講), either within the restricted circle of the team, or for a large monastic audience, or in a public sermon. In one case we hear of a famous Indian missionary delivering sermons by using an interpreter, but in only a very limited number of cases the texts expressly state that a foreign master actually "explained" a text in Chinese for any kind of audience. The problem is strikingly illustrated by a story about Guṇabhadra that in spite of its obviously legendary nature aptly symbolized the situation. Guṇabhadra has been engaged in translation work during the ten years he has already spent in China, but he still does not dare to preach (*jiang*) because of his faulty knowledge of Chinese. One night a divine being appears in his dream, holding a sword; after some reassuring words the god cuts off his head and replaces it with a replica, and the next morning the master finds that he is now speaking Chinese fluently.[37]

We also must note that only very rarely could foreign monks write Chinese. In only one case it is explicitly said that a (rather obscure) monk from India had himself written down the Chinese version and also was able to explain it in Chinese (*shou neng lishu, kou jie Qi yan* 手能隸書, 口能齊言).[38] The fact that the text highlights his ability to write Chinese is significant, as it suggests that, normally speaking, foreign monks were not able to do so.

The rather passive role of the foreign "missionaries" (if we still may go on calling them so) as repositories of non-Chinese texts and "blind recit-
[22] ers" had of course grave consequences for the further transmission of the ideas contained in the texts: their interpretation appears largely to have been a Chinese affair, and this in turn explains much of what is characteristic in early Chinese Buddhism.

There were, however, exceptions. After a lengthy stay in China some foreign monks (or, in a few cases, *upāsaka*s) did indeed hold sermons or explain texts. The most notable example is, of course, Kumārajīva, who is known to have amply discussed the meaning of scriptures and treatises with his many Chinese disciples, among whom we find some of the most creative minds of early Chinese Buddhist philosophy. What is even more notable is the quite exceptional fact that Kumārajīva also wrote

[37] *CSZJJ* j. 14, 105c; *GSZ* j. 3, 344b.

[38] *KYSJL* j. 7, 535b: Dharmakṛtayaśas translating the *Wuliang yi jing* 無量義經 in Canton in 481 CE (T 276).

(or let others write down) a considerable number of works in Chinese: a *Vimalakīrti* commentary; a treatise on "The True Characteristic [of Emptiness]" (*Shixiang lun* 實相論) which he composed for his imperial patron, and a voluminous correspondence dealing with scholastic topics.[39] Apart from Kumārajīva we only know of one foreign master publishing an original exegetical work in Chinese: a "General Introduction to the Scriptures" (*Zhongjing tongxu* 眾經通序) composed by Paramārtha.[40]

Kumārajīva's truly exceptional role deserves to be highlighted: together with the high quality of his translations and (in collaboration with his team) the creation of a new and exemplary scriptural style, it serves to explain why his activities deployed at Chang'an in the first decade of the fifth century really constitute a turning point in the history of early Chinese Buddhism.

So far we have only been speaking about recitation of texts from memory, which is somewhat misleading. From the available evidence it is quite clear that in most cases use was made of written texts. Sometimes such texts—even very voluminous ones—were brought in by the foreign monks, or sent to China by intermediaries; they evoke the image of the wandering monk carrying his texts and other religious objects in a rack on his back, a familiar theme in Chinese Buddhist iconography. But we also regularly hear of large numbers of Indian or Central Asian texts circulat-
[23] ing or being stored in China, waiting to be translated. Already in the third century Zhi Qian appears to have made many of his translations from foreign texts which he collected in China, and later we hear of considerable collections of such *huben* 胡本.

Thus, when in 556 CE Narendrayaśas arrived at the capital of the Northern Qi, the emperor had his collection of more than a thousand foreign

39 Cf. the many titles of exegetical texts written by Kumārajīva (mostly letters on scholastic topics) that are listed in Lu Cheng's 陸澄 *Falun mulu* 法論目錄 compiled shortly after 465; table of contents included in *CSZJJ* j. 12, 82c). Of these only a collection of sixteen letters to Huiyuan 慧遠) (334–416/417 CE), entitled *Dasheng da yi* (*zhang*) 大乘大意[章], has been preserved (T 1856); cf. also Kumārajīva's complementary letter to Huiyuan in the latter's biography (*GSZ* j. 6, 359c), and the still extant early fifth-century commentary on the *Vimalakīrti-nirdśa* (*Zhu Weimojie jing* 注維摩詰經), part of which consists of glosses by Kumārajīva.

40 Paramārtha's *Zhongjing tongxu* in two *juan*, listed in T 2149 *Da Tang neidian lu* 大唐內典錄 j. 10, 332a. It also mentions a seven-*juan* Fan Fanyan 翻梵言 by Paramārtha, which seems to have been a rather comprehensive list of Sanskrit words with Chinese translation. I have not mentioned the commentaries written in the third century by Kang Senghui and Zhi Qian, since both had been born in China and were completely sinicized.

texts, which he had kept in the palace, moved to the Taiping 太平 monastery, asking Narendrayaśas to "produce" them with the help or a translation team of twenty monks.[41] Moreover, in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries many foreign texts had been brought to China by Chinese pilgrims who stored them in their monasteries after their return. We regularly hear of the translation of such texts, imported from many different centres; as late as ca. 490 Dharmamati translated in Nanjing two texts that had been found in Khotan by the famous pilgrim Faxian almost a century before.[42]

In this way the work of translation did not have to rely upon the unstable basis of memorization. In numerous colophons and prefaces the standard formula is repeated: The master, X, holding the "foreign original" (*huben* 胡本), recited the text, and Y "transmitted the language" (*chuanyu* 傳語).

VIII. *Other Roles: Magician*, dhyāna *Expert, and Ordination Master*

Once more we must realize that the picture is distorted by a one-sided emphasis upon translation. Foreign monks must also have been active in many other roles which are far less well documented, or which we can only perceive indirectly, by their reflection in popular stories.

About the foreign master's role as a thaumaturge, performing miracles by the force of his saintliness or by the power of his *dhāraṇi* spells, something has already been said in relation with court sponsorship. However, the same image no doubt prevailed at lower levels of society, and in popular imagination this even appears to have been the most outstanding quality ascribed to the "barbarian priest." Occasionally the biographical sources also contain stories about famous wonder-working foreigners like the mysterious Indian Qiyu 耆域 (Jīvaka?) who arrived in Luoyang around 300 CE; he roamed around without any fixed abode, performing many feats of miraculous healing, clairvoyance and multiplication of his body.[43] Other masters are reported to have performed miracles that clearly
[24] belong to Chinese—notably Daoist—religious lore, such as control exerted

[41] *KYSJL* j. 7, 544b.
[42] *KYSJL* j. 6, 536a; cf. note by Sengyou in *CSZJJ* j. 2, 13b.
[43] *GSZ* j. 10, 388a.

over wild animals; high-speed displacement over a vast distance, and the disappearance of the body shortly after physical death.[44]

In the biographical sources such thaumaturgical powers are often associated with the practice of *dhyāna*, which at its higher stages was believed to lead to the acquisition of psychic powers. Some of those masters had a large following of Chinese disciples and admirers. Here, in the field of *dhyāna* practice, far removed from the more intellectual sphere of translation, exegesis and scripture-based preaching, the foreign monk acted as a guru initiating his disciples into the secrets of breath-control, mental concentration and the visualization of images, and in that context he could easily be believed to possess the gift of clairvoyance and other supernatural skills. It was no doubt for that reason that in the late fifth century the Nanjing court and many members of the elite admired the *dhyāna* master Ratnamati, who combined solitary meditation with the use of powerful spells, palm-reading, and divination by manipulating hundreds of cowrie shells.[45]

Finally, a very important role played by the foreign masters was the regular ordination of Chinese Buddhist monks and nuns at a time when the male and female *saṅgha* still were in their embryonic phase. As far as the male order is concerned, this took place around the middle of the third century when there was not yet any question of a regular Chinese monastic life; we are told that at that time Chinese monks only distinguished themselves from the profane by their tonsure, and that in ritual matters they simply conformed to indigenous Chinese cults. Around 250 CE two missionaries arrived at Luoyang, one from India and one from Parthia, and it was the Indian Dharmakāla who introduced the regular *Prātimokṣa* (*jieben* 誡本) formulary into China. He also "established (for the monks) the practice of the *Karmavācanā* (*jiemo* 羯磨, the standard procedures for the monastic life), and ordained them."[46]

Needless to say that this was a most essential contribution made by the foreign monks. By regularizing the monastic discipline and the procedure of ordination they made the incipient Chinese order of monks into a legitimate body, forming part of the universal "*saṅgha* of the ten direc-

[44] *GSZ* j. 9, 387c (biography of Zhu Fotiao 竺佛調 = Buddhadeva?); *ibid.*, j. 10, 388c (Jiantuole 犍陀勒); *ibid.*, 389a (Heluojie 訶羅竭). Cf. also the feats of magic performed in Luoyang by the thaumaturge Tanmoluo 曇摩羅 from Udyāna, as reported in the *Luoyang qielan ji* (Jenner, op. cit., 235; Wang, op. cit., 178).

[45] *GSZ* j. 3, 345a (appended to Guṇabhadra's biography).

[46] *GSZ* j. 1, 324b–325a.

tions (of space)." Their presence was necessary, not only because of their disciplinary know-how, but also because regular ordination could only be conferred in the presence of a chapter of ten fully ordained monks.

The activities of Dharmakāla are poorly documented, as is the early
[25] monastic history of the male Chinese *saṅgha* as a whole. About the role played by foreign masters in the creation of a regular female order (*biqiuni seng* 比丘尼僧, *bhikṣuṇī-saṅgha*) we know more; it is a story that forms one of the most curious episodes in the history of early Chinese Buddhism.

The first Chinese nuns had entered the order in the first half of the fourth century, both in the north and in the south, and already around 350 CE a convent had been founded at Nanjing. However, the procedure of ordination was far from orthodox, nor could it be, for in the *Vinaya* it is stipulated that for that ritual the presence of two chapters is required, one consisting of monks, and one of at least ten fully ordained sisters. A compromise was found by invoking the example of Mahāprajāpatī, the Buddha's aunt, and her retinue of Śākya women who had been admitted into the order by the Buddha himself; since they were the first nuns, they too had been ordained without any chapter of sisters. It was an argument of questionable validity; strictly speaking, the Chinese female order was still illegitimate.

It was only in the early fifth century, when the southern metropolitan area counted already several convents with hundreds of nuns, that the problem could be solved, thanks to the arrival, in 429 CE, of a small group of Singhalese nuns who had been brought to Canton by an Indian ship. Their number was not sufficient to form the required chapter of ten, so they were lodged in a convent in Nanjing, and Guṇavarman ordered them to learn Chinese. As a second step, Guṇavarman asked his friend Nandi, who was the captain of the ship, to provide him with a second group of nuns from Sri Lanka. So he did, and a few years later captain Nandi delivered at Canton eleven Singhalese nuns led by a certain sister Tiesaluo 鐵薩羅 (Tissarā?), who then managed to make their way to Nanjing. Guṇavarman had died in the meantime, but the project was successfully completed by his successor Saṅghavarman. In 434 CE he led the ceremony by which the first group of Chinese nuns was fully and regularly ordained.[47] It was a ritual act of supreme importance, because by this orthodox transmission of the doctrine the female order was directly con-

[47] T 2067 *Biquini zhuan* 比丘尼傳 j. 2, 939c, 941a; j. 3, 942b; *GSZ* j. 3, 341b; 342b; *CSZJJ* j. 14, 104c.

nected, by an uninterrupted monastic lineage, with Mahāprajāpatī, and through her with the Buddha himself, and only such a continuous filiation could guarantee the authenticity of the female *saṅgha* in China. In this case the foreign input played a decisive role.

[26] IX. *Concluding Remarks*

The *faits et gestes* of foreign monks in early medieval China have been presented in this paper as a subject in its own right; the full emphasis has been on their background, their religious education, their problems of acculturation and language training, and the various activities they engaged in. Occasionally some remarks have been made about the significance of their activities in the context of Chinese Buddhism as a whole, but in a provisional way, for much more research must be done. If any general conclusion can be drawn from this panoramic view, it could be that in most cases the role these foreign masters played in the actual formation of Chinese Buddhism appears to be less decisive and less substantial than we would assume it to be at first sight. With the exception of Kumārajīva and of a few thoroughly sinicized masters, the term "missionary" can hardly be applied to them: they have very little in common with their Christian counterparts of more than a millennium later, the Jesuit missionaries working in China in late Ming and early Qing times. Unlike the foreign Buddhist masters, these foreign Christians controlled the whole process, from the translation of texts to their orthodox interpretation and Confucian adaptation, whereas with a few exceptions the foreign Buddhist monks were involved only in the first stage, the furnishing of raw materials. All the rest was done by Chinese, and digested by Chinese minds. The difference is significant, for it may go part of the way toward explaining why the Jesuit mission failed, and Buddhism was to stay in China.

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XU GUANGQI AND BUDDHISM

Unlike some other late Ming Christian literati, like Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1563–1629), who before their conversion had been lay Buddhists, Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 had no Buddhist family background, and his knowledge of Buddhist doctrine appears to have been rather superficial. The only reference to Xu's interest in the subject occurs in his "Christian biography" (*Xu Guangqi xinglüe* 徐光啟行略, 1678, by Philippe Couplet and Zhang Xingyao 張星曜), in which it is said that in his early youth Xu not only studied the Confucian classics but also became broadly familiar with the Buddhist and Daoist scriptures, "which he considered illusory and false, and unfit to serve as a way to establish oneself in life, so after all he found no satisfaction in them".[1] However, this statement cannot be accepted at face value; it sounds like a *cliché* that one would expect to find in this clearly propagandistic Christian text. Xu Guangqi's anti-Buddhist writings testify of no more than a rather superficial acquaintance with Buddhist doctrinal ideas and of a critical observation of ritual and devotional practices which formed part of lay Buddhism, and which he rejected as being irrational and superstitious.

In taking his stand against Buddhism Xu was inspired from two different quarters, which, however, in his worldview were completely integrated: his adherence to the movement called "Practical" (or "Solid") studies (*shixue* 實學), and his acceptance of "Heavenly Studies" (*tianxue* 天學), i.e. the combination of Christian beliefs and European science and technology introduced by the Jesuits. The way in which in his case these various elements constituted a consistent whole is abundantly attested in his writings. It starts from the observation that in the course of many centuries the original teachings of Confucius (a system of pure moral guidelines

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1 Couplet and Zhang 1678:1b (for bibliographical data see Appendix). In his "Summary Account of my Father's Life" (*Xiankao shilüe* 先考事略, *XGQJ* vol. II: 526), Xu merely states that his father "was generally familiar with books on *yin* and *yang*, astrology, mantic arts, and Buddhist and Daoist texts", which does not suggest a specific commitment to Buddhism. That Xu Guangqi himself as a young boy received his elementary education in a village school in a Buddhist temple is not relevant, since temples were very often used to that purpose.

for the individual, state and society, combined with some kind of original
[156] monotheism) had become both incomplete and degenerated. Part of the ancient wisdom had been destroyed by the "fires of Qin", and whatever remained had become diluted and—literally—mystified by borrowings from Buddhism and Daoism. As a result, in some quarters Confucianism had been deflected from its down-to-earth, practical aims of political and social guidance (*jingshi* 經世) and turned into a metaphysical system of vain theorizing and mystical introspection. The Heavenly Studies may serve to remedy the situation in various ways. They serve to restore the original monotheism of China's golden past and thus "fill the gaps in Confucianism" (*bu ru* 補儒). By their emphasis on science and technology they reinforce the practical value of Confucianism-cum-Christianity for state and society. And last but not least, the Jesuits' utter rejection of Buddhism, Daoism, and all kinds of "popular superstition" serves to improve the mores and to restore Confucianism to its pristine purity. It was on the basis of this hybrid ideology that Xu Guangqi developed his anti-Buddhist argumentation.

In doing so, he was also directly influenced by the Jesuits' own polemical writings (and no doubt also by their ideas as they expressed them in oral communication), and it may therefore be useful here to summarize the Jesuit arguments as found in Matteo Ricci's Chinese writings (notably in his *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 and in his letter to the Buddhist scholar Yu Chunxi 虞淳熙 of 1610).

(1) The first and most basic objection concerns the transcendental nature of the Buddha, who has passed beyond all existence, and who is therefore superior to even the highest gods.[2] In the Jesuit perspective this means that Śākyamuni, a mere human teacher, has attempted to place himself above God—an act of spiritual usurpation and rebelliousness.

(2) The Buddhist argument that Buddhahood here stands for the "undifferentiated" Absolute (called *kong* 空, "Emptiness") as the substratum of all phenomena is rejected: Ricci and all later Jesuit apologists take *kong* in its literal sense, and deny that such Emptiness (and "Nonbeing", *wu* 無) can produce anything.[3]

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[2] Ricci 1603, I, section 4: 47a–48b: Lancashire and Hu 1985: 205-09 (par. 208–42); also in Ricci's letter to Yu Chunxi, in *Bianxue yidu* 辯學遺牘 (see Appendix), p. 4b (p. 644).

[3] Ricci 1603, I, section 2: 13a–14b; Lancashire and Hu 1985: 103–107 (par. 71–76).

(3) The Buddhist combination of *karma* (Retribution) and Rebirth or Reincarnation is a fallacy. Retribution does not take place in the course of successive lives in human or non-human forms, but is the exclusive domain of God, who metes out heavenly rewards and infernal punishment in the hereafter. The Buddhists have borrowed the idea of Rebirth from Pythagoras (*Bitagelasi* 畢達哥拉斯), a heathen philosopher.[4]

(4) Various arguments, both scholastic and commonsense, are used to prove the absurdity of the belief in Rebirth, the most basic one being that only human beings possess a rational soul, which God has
[157] bestowed upon us, and by which we are qualitatively different from all other creatures.[5] Other, less sophisticated arguments: nobody can remember happenings from previous lives (the rare attested cases of "prenatal reminiscence" are explained as tricks played by the Devil);[6] for really wicked people rebirth as a ferocious animal would not be a punishment but rather a welcome opportunity to satisfy their murderous instincts.[7]

(5) It follows that vegetarianism serves no purpose. Since human souls cannot be reborn in animals, the Buddhist argument that by killing and consuming animals one risks eating one's own relatives from a former life is unfounded. God has created animals, vegetation and all other things exclusively for the use of man.[8]

(6) Buddhism is blamed for having corrupted Chinese morals. It has been in China for two millennia, but as regards "the human mind and the management of worldly [affairs]" (*renxin shidao* 人心世道) it has not led to any improvement (the situation in China is here naturally contrasted with the beneficial influence exerted by Christianity in Europe ever since the beginning of our era).[9]

(7) Popular Buddhist practices, such as idolatry and the mechanical chanting of the Buddha's (i.e. Amitābha's) name, are harmful because they are based upon the mistaken belief that sinners can obtain release by such simple means, without deep-felt repentance.[10]

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4 Ricci 1603, II, section 5: 1b; Lancashire and Hu 1985: 241 (par. 260–61).

5 Ricci 1603, II, section 5; 4a–b; Lancashire and Hu 1985: 247–50 (par. 270–73).

6 Ricci 1603, II, section 5: 2b–3a; Lancashire and Hu 1985:235–44 (par. 265–66).

7 Ricci 1603, II, section 5; 5b; Lancashire and Hu 1985: 253 (par. 278).

8 Ricci 1603, II, section 5: 6a–8a; Lancashire and Hu 1985: 255–61 (par. 280–88).

9 Ricci's reply to Yu Chunxi, in *Bianxue yidu*: 6a (647).

10 Ricci 1603, II, section 7: 31b and 33b; Lancashire and Hu 1985: 391 and 397–98 (par. 488–90 and par. 400–501). Ricci apparently did not feel the need to explain the difference

(8) There is a deplorable tendency to mix Confucian with Buddhist and Daoist ideas, culminating in the syncretism of the "Three Doctrines" (*san jiao* 三教) movement, "a monster with one body and three heads". Such attempts at amalgamation are to be rejected, for those doctrines are basically incompatible, and by trying to embrace three religions one will end up with no religion at all.[11]

There can be no doubt that Xu Guangqi was deeply influenced by the early Jesuit polemic against Buddhism; many (though by no means all) of the objections listed above can be found in his writings. However, as we shall see, he did not merely echo his teacher's voice; he developed some
[158] arguments in an original way; he changed the emphasis, and he added much of his own.

* * *

To judge from his extant writings, Xu Guangqi's personal involvement in anti-Buddhist polemics reached a climax between ca. 1615 and ca. 1620, i.e. in the period that largely coincides with the first persecution of Christianity that was launched by Shen Que 沈㴶 (?–1624), the Vice-President of the Board of Rites in Nanjing. Much has been written about the history and background of that movement, and there is no need to treat it here again.[12] Two points are, however, directly relevant to our subject. In the first place, the studies made by Kelly, Kern, and Dudink have made quite clear that, even though Shen Que was to some extent critical of Buddhism, the persecution (which in the end proved to be short-lived and ineffective) was largely instigated by a network of Buddhist monks and Buddhist literati. In the second place, the Buddhist opponents of Christianity belonged to the following of the famous Buddhist master Zhuhong 袾宏 (1535–1615), the founder of a Buddhist revivalist movement that had become extremely popular among the gentry, especially in the Jiangnan 江南 region, ever since the last decades of the sixteenth century.[13]

between Buddhist idolatry and the use of images in Christian worship. Xu Guangqi has done so in his popular (vernacular) treatise "Summary Explanation of the Holy Image of the Lord of Heaven, *Tianzhu shengxiang lüeshuo* 天主聖像略說 (see bibliographical appendix): 561–62.

[11] Ricci 1603 II, section 7: 35a–36b; Lancashire and Hu 1985: 401-07 (par. 508–18).

[12] Cf. Kelly 1971; Kern 1992; Dudink 1995, chapter 1; D. Lancashire 1968–1969; and Ōchō 1949: 1–20, and 1950; 18–38.

[13] For Zhuhong's activities see Yü Chün-fang 1981; for Zhuhong's criticism of Christianity see Kern 1992: 75–90. An excellent survey and analysis of the flourishing of elite lay Buddhism in the Jiangnan region in the 17th century is presented by Brook 1993.

Zhuhong, who had died in 1615, just before the outbreak of the persecution, had become superficially acquainted with Christianity by reading Ricci's "True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven" (*Tianzhu shiyi*), and towards the end of his life he had responded to some Christian ideas (notably the nature of the Christian God and the rejection of vegetarianism) by writing four short essays, all entitled "On Heaven" (*Tianshuo* 天説).

We know that Xu Guangqi engaged in a polemic by writing a critical response to Zhuhong's essays (and, according to a Christian story, thereby so utterly defeated Zhuhong that the old heresiarch died of chagrin, after having admitted on his death-bed that all his teachings had been false). The story is demonstrably untrue, but there is no reason to doubt Xu Guangqi's authorship of a "Refutation of Zhuhong's *Tianshuo*". As has been demonstrated by Standaert,[14] four texts written in reaction to Zhuhong's *Tianshuo*—preserved in the collection "Posthumous Letters Discussing [Topics of] Learning" (*Bianxue yidu*, published shortly after
[159] 1621, hereafter *BXYD*)—very probably are identical with, or excerpted from, Xu's "Refutation", although in this collection they are erroneously attributed to Matteo Ricci.[15]

The second major source of information on Xu Guangqi's criticism of Buddhism is a lengthy polemical essay entitled "A Refutation of [Buddhist] Errors" (*Pi* [*Shishi zhu*] *wang* 闢[釋氏諸]妄). It is said to have been written in reaction to attacks on Christianity waged by the Buddhist masters Zhuhong of Hangzhou and Yuanwu of Ningbo, and by the lay devotee Yu Chunxi. Like the texts contained in *BXYD*, Xu's "Refutation of Errors" appears to have been written before Zhuhong's death (1615) and hence also before the outbreak of the Nanjing persecution. It is divided into eight sections, dealing with eight Buddhist superstitious ideas and practices; (1) the ritual of "opening Hell" (*po yu* 破獄); (2) "feeding [the spirits]" (*shi shi* 施食); (3) the belief in homeless and lonely spirits (*gu hun* 孤魂) and in the Lake of Blood (*xuehu* 血湖) reserved in Hell for women who have died in childbirth; (4) burning paper money; (5) chanting spells; (6) the belief in Reincarnation; (7) reciting the Buddha's name (*nian fo* 念佛), and (8) the errors of the Chan doctrine (*chanzong* 禪宗).

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[14] Cf. Standaert 1988: 175–182.

[15] For a discussion of the authorship of the first document in *Bianxue yidu*, which I regard as an authentic letter by M. Ricci, see the bibliographical appendix, under *Bianxue yidu*.

Taken together, the *BXYD* and the "Refutation of Errors" serve to illustrate Xu's criticism of Buddhist beliefs and practices before 1616, i.e. in a situation of controversy and polemic, but not yet in the context of hostile confrontation.

In 1616 the context changed. The Jesuits and their doctrine—and, by implication, Xu Guangqi himself—were under direct attack. The Jesuits were about to be arrested as subversive elements and leaders of a heterodox sect, and the official documents, such as Shen Que's memorials of impeachment, contained suggestive remarks about prominent Chinese officials and scholars who conspired with them. The two texts written by Xu in defence of the Jesuits and their activities were therefore not only aimed at proving their innocence—they no doubt also were written in self-defence.

The first text was written by Xu in response to Shen Que's memorial of impeachment of June/July 1616; it is entitled "Draft memorial discussing [topics of] learning" (*Bianxue shugao* 辯學疏稿, *var. BX zhangshu* 辯學章疏); somewhat later he also drafted the text of the "Reply to Accusations" (*Jujie* 具揭) submitted by Diego de Pantoja and Sabbatino de Ursis in the late summer of the same year.

In both these apologetic texts considerable attention is paid to Buddhism in relation to Christianity, a comparison that, expectably, turns out in favour of the latter. However, in their general purport these apologetic texts are quite different from the polemic texts dating from before 1616. Under the circumstances Xu had to operate cautiously. Buddhism is represented as an inferior creed, but at the same time it is taken seriously: in order to define the merits of Buddhism and Christianity, Xu
[160] makes the interesting proposal to organize a kind of "public debate": "Let the officers of the Tributary States (*peichen* 陪臣, i.e. the Jesuits) and illustrious Buddhist and Daoist [masters] hold a debate with each other, analysing [all issues] down to the last detail and striving to reduce them to unity (*wu qiu gui yi* 務求歸一, "to find common ground"); moreover, Confucian scholar-officials should discuss [the conclusions] and reach a verdict".[16] He adds that if the missionaries do not present convincing arguments they should be banished, and in that case he would willingly share their fate.

16 *Bianxue shugao* (see appendix), p. 5b (*WXXB* vol. 1: 30); *Jujie* (see appendix): 20a–b.

After the second phase of Shen Que's anti-Christian offensive had passed (1622) and the Jesuits quietly had resumed their activities, Xu Guangqi no longer engaged in anti-Buddhist argumentation. Apparently he did not feel the urge to do so. He was a man of action, primarily attracted by matters like mathematics, astronomy, agriculture and national defence; unlike Yang Tingyun, he was basically not interested in theological issues. That may also be the reason why in his criticism of Buddhism he hardly ever touches on fundamental matters such as the relation between the Christian concept of divinity and the Chinese (both Buddhist and Neo-Confucian) ideas of immanent order (*li* 理) and of a unifying transcendental substratum (the *taiji* 太極 of the Neo-Confucians; the universal "Emptiness" of Mahāyāna ontology). Both the Jesuits and some of their converts were deeply interested in those problems, and they discussed them at length in their writings, Not so Xu Guangqi. When Zhuhong in the first part of his *Tianshuo* defines *tian* 天, "Heaven", as identical with *li*, Xu does not pursue the argument (he simply states that God is Spirit, *shen* 神, and not *li*), and he cuts it short by saying, characteristically: "But the theory concerning the investigation of things and the complete analysis of *li* is very prolix. At this moment it is hard to exhaust it, so please let us talk about it some other day".[17]

However, this lack of interest in theoretical discussion does not imply that Xu made no general statements about Buddhism on a somewhat lower level of abstraction. Thus, in his draft memorial of 1616 he describes China's adoption of Buddhism as a kind of collective "act of despair". Referring to the classical *topoi* of existential "injustice" (the virtuous Yan Hui 顔回 dying young; the villain Zhi 跖 enjoying a long and prosperous life), Xu states that in Han times people were upset by these seemingly random workings of Fate, and that Buddhism was welcomed because its theory of Rebirth and karmic Retribution seemed to provide a logical and consistent explanation. At the same time the theory served to incite people to virtue and to avoid sin. However, during the 1,800 years of its existence in China it had not been able to improve the manage-
[161] ment of worldly affairs and the human mind (*shidao renxin* 世道人心; cf. Ricci's almost identical statement quoted above). Buddhism is based on a fundamental fallacy to begin with; the Chinese saintly rulers of Antiquity adored the Sovereign-on-High (*Shangdi* 上帝), but the believers ranked

17 *Bianxue yidu*: 14a (*TXCH* vol. 2: 663).

the Buddha even higher than *Shangdi*, which clearly runs counter to the intention of the ancient Chinese rulers, saints and sages. But apart from that act of spiritual usurpation, Buddhism had also been subjected to an internal process of degeneration. The Chan masters mixed Buddhism with ideas borrowed from Laozi and Zhuangzi, and as a result their teachings are vague and irrelevant (*youmiao er wudang* 幽眇而無當), and the Tantric practitioners adulterated the doctrine by the use of talismans and magical formulas.[18] It is to be noted that apart from the theme of the Buddha "usurping" the status of God (the Jesuits' main objection, here changed into an act of rebellion not towards God but towards the pious rulers of China's past), the line of reasoning presented by Xu is not inspired by Jesuit criticism; instead it stresses the internal degeneration of Buddhism, which is a traditional Chinese theme.

The two factors which according to Xu are primarily responsible for that degeneration, viz. the superstitious belief in magic formulas and incantations and the pernicious influence of "Buddho-Daoist" Chan doctrine, are treated at length in sections 5 and 8 of his "Refutation of Errors" (*Pi wang* 闢妄).

In section 5, Xu demonstrates the logical inconsistencies inherent in the use of spells (*mantra*) as a means to obtain (male) offspring and riches. The recitation of such formulas is aimed at invoking the grace of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. However, since those beings were born from their parents' intercourse, they are not divine and they cannot influence the believers' fate. And if, on the other hand, one uses them as mediators pleading one's case before God (an utterly non-Buddhist idea, borrowed by Xu from Christianity), it would be much better to pray directly to the Lord. Whenever a spell fails to have any effect, all kinds of specious arguments are used, such as "the spell should be recited more times", or "the chanting should last longer", or even "due to your burden of sin the effect will not be realized in this life but in the next one". All this is useless, for in actual fact our fate has been ordained by Heaven. Only one spell is really effective—the spell of God himself, that says: "If you do good, He will bestow goodness [upon you]; accumulating goodness will lead to a surplus of happiness [in the hereafter] (*zuo shan jiang shan, ji shan yu qing* 做善獎善, 積 善余慶)."[19]

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[18] *Bianxue shugao*: 2b–3a (*WXXB* vol. 1: 24–25).
[19] *Pi wang* (see appendix), section 5: 9a–10b (*WXXB* vol. 1: 635–638).

In section 8, Chan Buddhism is attacked in very strong terms; he obviously was irritated by the "vagueness" of Chan with its emphasis upon silent introspection, its intuitionism and its preference for irrational statements. Chan practitioners go on reciting their texts and stanzas,
[162] but whatever they say just amounts to "grasping the wind and catching shadows". Because they have no insight into the real meaning of human Nature (*xing* 性) they make it into an intangible, mysterious entity, "not to be expressed in writing" (*buyong wenzi* 不用文字); they even use blows and shouting to realize what they call Sudden Enlightenment, and in some of their *kōan* human Nature is degraded to the level of animals ("does a dog have the Buddha-nature?"), of inanimate matter ("a sixteen pounds' hemp robe"), or excrements ("a wooden arse-wiper").[20] How can one be satisfied with a doctrine in which such futile and immoral statements are used to describe the true Creator of all things, the one of whom it is said in the *Book of Changes*: "Truly great is the originating force of *Qian* 乾, from which all beings take their rise; truly perfect is the originating force of *Kun* 坤, by which all beings are kept alive"! As a gruesome example of "mere talk about Emptiness" Xu quotes the stanzas spoken by the Buddha when he transmitted the highest truth to the elder Kāśyapa: "In the phenomenal phenomena there basically are no phenomena; the non-phenomenal phenomena still are phenomenal…" (*fa ben fa wu fa, wu fa fa yi fa*…法本法無法，無法法亦法) etc. How could people who utter such gibberish know about the Creator who is the root and source of all existence? In short: "Their principles have nothing to do with real practice, and their behaviour is not defined by [the belief in] the Single Venerable One" (*li buguan yu shi jian, xing buding yu yizun* 理不關於實踐，行不定於一尊).[21]

As in the case of some other late Ming converted literati, Xu Guangqi's creed can best be characterized as "Confucian monotheism": it is almost exclusively focused upon the belief in a single, all-powerful Creator-God, the controller of human destiny in life, and the stern judge in the hereafter. The whole complex of Rebirth and Redemption is hardly ever touched upon. It is therefore not surprising that in criticizing Buddhist popular

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[20] References to some well-known "shocking" Chan 禪 sayings. The first one refers to Master Congshen 從諗's (778–897) enigmatic answer to the question whether a dog possesses the Buddha-nature; a monk inquired about the origin of the One, the same Master retorted the "In Qingzhou 青州 I made a hemp robe weighing seven (not "sixteen") pounds"; Master Wenyan 文偃 (864–949) told a monk that the Buddha was no more than "a piece of wood to wipe your arse with" (flat pieces of wood being used as we use toilet paper). Cf. Liebenthal 1977:42, 82; Dumoulin 1953: 60.

[21] *Pi wang*, section 8: 14b–17a (*WXXB* vol. 2: 646–651).

beliefs and customs (as he does at length in his *Pi wang*), time and again the theme of God's justice (*yi* 義) comes in: God is just and fair, whereas such superstitious practices start from the assumption that the higher powers are partisan, or even venal. Thus, the rituals performed to liberate souls from Hell are absurd, for God would not allow some sinners to escape while others have to go on suffering;[22] moreover, in that case only the souls from well-to-do families (who can afford such costly rituals)
[163] als) would be saved, and God would never tolerate such an injustice.[23] It does not make sense to make special food-offerings for "lonely wandering ghosts", for the divine justice does not make any distinction: all souls are judged, and rewarded or punished according to their deeds.[24] The belief in the "blood lake" is a scandalous form of superstition: God has given women the capacity to bear children, and the blood shed during childbirth forms part of the life-giving, reproductive process; God would never allow it to be used as an infernal punishment.[25]

Xu resolutely rejects the Buddhist theory of rebirth, and here again his argumentation is only partially derived from Jesuit theses.

His first objection is based upon a curiously "quantitative" way of reasoning: if, as the Buddhists believe, souls were transmigrating from one bodily form (human or non-human) to another, circulating on the "six levels of existence", it follows that in that case sentient life would consist of a fixed number of souls; no new souls would ever be created. In a number of cases rebirth is supposed to take place at the human level, souls being reborn from one human body into the next one, but since in the course of aeons most souls will have committed sins (leading to rebirth on sub-human levels), it is to be expected that in the course of time the number of human beings will proportionately decrease. How then can it be explained that since antiquity the human population has steadily grown?[26]

Some people argue that Rebirth is the only way to explain social inequality, the difference between noble and lowly, rich and poor. Xu does not accept the argument: those hierarchical distinctions are natural and necessary. Social inequality in society is paralleled by the natural hierarchy of the parts of the human body (the head versus hands and feet) and of the heavenly bodies (the sun versus moon and stars). Has not Mencius said

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[22] *Pi wang*, section 1: 2b (*WXXB* vol. 2: 622).
[23] *Pi wang*: 2b–3a (*WXXB* vol. 2: 622–623).
[24] *Pi wang*: 4b (*WXXB* vol. 2: 626).
[25] *Pi wang*: 5b–6a (*WXXB* vol. 2: 628–629).
[26] *Pi wang*: 10b–11a (*WXXB* vol. 2: 638–639).

that "But for the ruler, nobody would govern the commoners; but for the commoners, nobody would feed the ruler"? This is a universal truth, and it has nothing to do with Reincarnation.[27]

In fact, there is no such thing as a fixed quantity of circulating "old souls" (*jiu shen* 舊神). While parents through sexual intercourse give birth to the human body, God creates for every individual a "new soul" (*xin shen* 新神), for God is the great creative power (here Xu again quotes the passage from the *Book of Changes* about *Qian* and *Kun* being the source of all life). The soul does not circulate but has a single, individual, linear existence, passing from this life into the hereafter. Thus the problem of social inequality will also be solved, for God will admit a virtuous soul to
[164] Heaven, even if the person has been lowly and poor, and he will throw the sinner into Hell, even if he has been powerful and rich. Thus there is a constant stream of individual souls undergoing retribution, but no rebirth: "On the Yangzi every wave follows closely upon the preceding wave—but would that mean that those waves are reincarnating?"[28]

Since there is no question of souls being reborn on various levels of existence, one of the traditional Buddhist reasons for not killing animals for consumption loses its force: there is no danger that one may slaughter and consume a being into whose body the soul of one's departed father or mother has been incarnated. As we have seen, this subject was also treated at length by Matteo Ricci in his *Tianzhu shiyi*. He reduces the Buddhist argument *ad absurdum* by expanding the number of situations in which a person unwittingly could burden himself with sin. Thus, if one's parents could have been reborn as human beings, one would run the risk of marrying one's own mother. But what about servants and slave-girls, who often are scolded and treated harshly, and who have to perform menial work—would it not be a gross act of impiety to do this, if there is even the slightest chance that they are your erstwhile parents (or, for that matter, your deceased uncles, elder brothers or friends)? And if that were true, we should also abstain from using riding-horses and oxen who have to perform hard labour, and so on. In other words: the. Buddhist theory is self-defeating; if it were true, the world would become an impossible place to live in.[29]

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27 *Pi wang*: 12a (*WXXB* vol. 2: 641).
28 *Pi wang*: 12a (*WXXB* vol. 2: 641).
29 Ricci 1603 II, section 5: 6a–b and 7a; Lancashire and Hu 1985: 255 (par. 280) and 259 (par. 282).

In Xu Guangqi's reaction to Zhuhong's second *Tianshuo* he repeats Ricci's arguments, adding that this clearly demonstrates that a hypothetical Rebirth is incompatible with divine Justice. Because people would constantly be committing the most heinous crimes like parricide and incest, the world would be "one huge pitfall", and God would in fact be enticing people into sin. This can never have been God's intention.

Xu repeats Ricci's argument about human beings as a unique privileged species as well as the conclusion that all other creatures have been given to mankind to be used and exploited.[30] Here, however, Xu adds, by way of further justification, a curious theory that is definitely not of Jesuit origin; it amounts to saying that since the earliest times mankind has been involved in a "struggle for existence" in competition with the animal world. In prehistoric times the world was infested with dangerous and rapacious animals; they constantly threatened human beings with their claws, fangs and poison. The only way for humans to survive was to engage in hunting and to kill them. Later on, after the development of agriculture, man's
[165] very existence was threatened by animals that ate or destroyed the crops, like rats and swarms of locusts, and they too had to be killed. Once killed, their meat and skins could be used for food and protection, but that only was a secondary objective. Human survival made killing indispensable in the first place. And even if one were to stop killing animals now, the result would be disastrous, because their uninhibited propagation would make human life impossible: "One locust or the like [if left to procreate freely] will lead to the extermination of all grain; one tiger or the like will lead to the extermination of mankind". Without killing nobody will be left in the world within one century; "If man does not kill them, they are sure to kill man!" For whose sake did God create the world: for human beings or for animals?[31]

Here, as in the case of Xu's "quantitative" treatment of the problem of Rebirth, a theological issue has largely lost its religious content (except in the last phrase): vegetarianism is a practical impossibility, for killing is indispensable. This is characteristic of Xu Guangqi's pragmatic, down-to-earth frame of mind. This urge to confront the Buddhist opponent with "hard facts" even more clearly appears from his reaction to Zhuhong's first *Tianshuo*, in which he uses scientific data, derived from Western geography and astronomy, to attack some notions of traditional Buddhist cosmology.

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[30] *Bianxue yidu*: 23b (*WXXB* vol. 2; 682).
[31] *Bianxe yidu*: 24a–25a (*WXXB* vol. 2; 683–685).

According to Zhuhong, the Christian God, who after all has only created one heaven and one earth, is a low-ranking deity. He is, in fact, nobody else but the god Śakra (Indra), who rules this single world from his "Heaven of the Thirty-three [Gods]" (*Sanshisan tian* 三十三天*, Trāyastrimśa*). He and his divine retinue dwell on top of Mt. Sumeru, the central mountain that is surrounded by the four continents. It follows that Ricci's view is extremely limited. He does not know that there are innumerable worlds, clustered in "world-systems" of staggering size that are floating in space; he does not realize that in the divine hierarchy there are other Gods, infinitely more powerful than the Christian Lord of Heaven, such as Mahā-Brahma-devarāja, whose sway extends over a billion worlds, and Ricci is even less aware of the existence of even higher planes of existence: the Sphere of [Mere] Form (*se jie* 色界) and the Sphere of the Formless (*wuse jie* 無色界).[32]

In his rejoinder Xu first points out that the Buddhist theory of Four Continents has been superseded: according to Western geography there are five continents, the fifth one having been discovered in the Hongzhi 弘治 era (1488–1505); Asia and Europe together constitute a huge continuous land-mass, and in the central region, where Europe borders upon Asia, there are very high mountains. This had given rise to the mythical tradition about Mt. Sumeru, or Mt. Kunlun 崑崙, or Mt. Gaomiao 高
[166] 妙, surrounded by "Four Continents". As to the Buddhist "Thirty-three Heavens" (as Xu misinterprets the term), this is no more than a distorted echo of Western astronomical science. According to Western cosmology, the earth is surrounded by twelve spheres, some of which (notably the spheres of sun and moon and the five planets) can be subdivided into three to five layers, altogether adding up to more than thirty. These are concrete phenomena that can be observed; they have nothing to do with gods. And, incidentally, Westerners who often visit India have spoken about those matters with learned Brahmins, and it appears that such ideas are completely unknown to them. They are only found in the Chinese Buddhist canon, and we may assume that they have been borrowed from the wild speculations of the fanciful cosmologist Zou Yan 鄒衍. According to Xu such borrowing is not surprising, and (following Ricci) he points out that the Buddhists have stolen the theory of Rebirth from Pythagoras, the concepts of Heaven and Hell from the Christians, and many abstruse concepts from Daoist philosophers.[33]

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32 *Bianxue yidu*: 8a–b (*WXXB* vol. 2: 651–652).
33 *Bianxue yidu*: 10b–11b (*WXXB* vol. 2: 656–658).

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We may conclude that from whatever we know about his attitude towards Buddhism and from the argumentation he uses, Xu Guangqi emerges as the same *persona* we know from his other writings, activities and fields of interest. He was, above all, a down-to-earth realist, intent on solving practical problems; he rarely ventures into philosophical or theological debate, and in attacking Buddhism he concentrates upon concrete "superstitious" practices. In the rare cases in which fundamental theological issues are at stake, he echoes Ricci's arguments (the Buddha as a rebel) without further comment. Xu's main objections against Buddhism were that it had in no way contributed to the "management of worldly affairs" or to morality; that it led people astray by propagating Retribution instead of divine Justice; that it was irrational (and in that respect to be corrected by the findings of Western science), and, above all, that it was vague and intangible.

On all these points Buddhism could be contrasted with the Heavenly Studies, for these were not concerned with Emptiness and Non-being, but with *shi* 實, solid, tangible facts: a single well-defined God whose existence can be proved by means of logical reasoning; a simple and very concrete concept of the human fate in the hereafter (much less complicated than the Buddhist theory of Rebirth); and all this combined with clear-cut moral rules and the benefits of science and technology. It is not without reason that Ricci, in a terse enumeration of the points on which his doctrine differed from Buddhism, started with "They occupy themselves with the Void; we occupy ourselves with what is solid" (*bi yi xu, wo yi shi*
[167] 彼以虛，我以實),[34] In the case of Xu Guangqi, this *shi* may well have been the key concept that made the Heavenly Studies so attractive. No doubt it also constituted the vantage point from which he attacked Buddhism. Buddhism had failed to cure a sick world, and Xu firmly believed that it had lost its right to exist. Or, in his own words:

> That the practice of a doctrine leads to less depravity and more virtue—that is how it is put to the test. Now 1,800 years have passed since Buddhism entered China; has depravity really decreased? Has virtue really increased? As regards the human mind and the management of worldly affairs, to what extent have goodness and fine qualities multiplied if compared with the

[34] Ricci's letter to Yu Chunxi, *Bianxue yidu*: 6a (*WXXB* vol. 2: 647).

time before its introduction? Since it very clearly has had no results, the day has come to abandon the therapy and to change the medicine![35]

Appendix: Bibliographical Notes On Chinese Sources

Bianxue shugao 辯學疏稿, var. *Bianxue zhangshu* 辯學章疏. A draft memorial written by Xu Guangqi in defence of the Christians during the persecution launched by Shen Que 沈㴶.

- Xu Zongze 1958; 234ff.; Bernard 1945 II no. 105; cf. bibliographical note by Fang Hao in *WXXB* vol. 1: iii–iv; English translation in Kelly 1971: 294–302.
- Earliest edition reproduced in *WXXB* vol. 1: 19–36, printed after Xu Guangqi's death, but still a Ming edition; also in *XWDGJ juan* 5: 1–8 and *XGQJ* vol. II: 431–37.
- Written in response to Shen Que's anti-Christian memorial of June/July 1616; that Xu wrote this draft (never presented to the throne, cf. Kelly 1971: 179) immediately after the arrival of Shen Que's memorial appears from the date at the end, in the Ming edition, corresponding to August/September 1616. Xu wrote the apology in his quality as a corrector (*jiantao* 檢討) at the Hanlin Academy.

Bianxue yidu 辯學遺牘. A collection of letters/essays written in response to a letter by lay Buddhist Yu Chunxi 虞淳熙 (1553–1621) and Zhuhong's four essays "On Heaven" (*Tianshuo* 天説); all the five responses bear the name of Matteo Ricci. Apart from the first letter which probably is by Ricci, the other texts are very probably by Xu Guangqi (cf. Standaert 1988: 175–82).

- Xu Zongze 1958: 119; Bernard 1945 II no. 103 and 177.
- [168] The essay used is the printed edition published by Li Zhizao 李之藻 (1565–1630) and included in his. collection *TXCH* in 1629 (Taipei reprint vol. II: 637–88).
- The first text included in the *Bianxue yidu* is a letter written by Matteo Ricci to Yu Chunxi. I do not agree with Standaert (1988 181) that this also is a false attribution. The text differs widely from the other four texts that probably are by Xu Guangqi. In the first letter the author regularly refers to himself as "[I], Dou 竇" [= Li Madou 利瑪竇], and he uses self-depreciatory terms "I, Dou, a mean person from the distant West" and "my humble country". Such expressions do not occur in the other four texts, where *xiren* 西人, "people from the West", are mentioned. The first letter also states that at the time of writing Ricci had settled in Beijing "ten years ago", which (according to the Chinese way of calculating) would yield 1610, the year of Ricci's death, which is quite plausible. The last four texts may have been attributed to Ricci by mistake (simply extending Ricci's authorship of the first letter to the whole collection), but if the first letter would also be of Xu Guangqi's hand, it

[35] *Jujie*: 20a–b.

would have been a deliberate and outright forgery. In view of Xu's boundless admiration for Ricci this is of course highly improbable.

Jujie 具揭 (var. *Bianjie* 辯揭). A statement written in defence of the missionaries and of Christianity, submitted in August 1616 by Diego de Pantoja (Pang Di'e 龐迪峨, 1571–1618) and Sabbatino de Ursis (Xiong Sanba, 熊三拔 1575–1620), in response to Shen Que's memorial of impeachment. Published under their names, but no doubt written by Xu Guangqi.

- Xu Zongze 1958: 235; Bernard 1945 II no. 107 and 118.
- The text used is the manuscript copy BNF Chinois 7321.

Pi [*Shishi zhu*] *wang* 闢[釋氏諸]妄.[36] An anti-Buddhist treatise by Xu Guangqi, in eight sections, criticizing a number of popular Buddhist beliefs and practices, and, in the last section, the "vague and intangible ideas" of Chan Buddhism.

- Xu Zongze 1958: 106–10; bibliographical note by Fang Hao in *WXSB* vol. I: 21. The version used is the printed Ming edition reproduced in *WSXB* II: 619–51.
- Xu's text is also included in a later composite work entitled "Combined Edition of *Pi wang* and *Tiaobo* (*Piwang tiaobo he ke* 闢妄條駁合刻), published in 1689 by "John" Wang (Wang Ruohan 王若翰). The "discussion section by section" (*tiaobo*) refers to the refutation by Hong Ji 洪濟 and Zhang Xing-
[169] yao 張星曜 of the arguments of a mid-seventeenth century monk who had written a polemic response to Xu Guangqi's treatise. The *Pi wang* text included in this work slightly differs from the Ming edition; the copy used is BNF Chinois 7107.

Tianzhu shengxiang lüeshuo 天主聖像略説, var. *Zaowuzhu chuixiang lüeshuo* 造物主垂像略説. A "Summary Explanation of the Holy Image", written in 1615 (cf. p. 557: "Jesus was born 1615 years ago") by Xu Guangqi, a popular treatise written in the vernacular.

- Xu Zongze 1958: 176 and Bernard 1945 II no. 112 wrongly attribute the treatise to J. da Rocha, probably on the basis of Pfister 1932–1934: 69, but Pfister there clearly refers to de Rocha's illustrated treatise about the practice of the Rosary, which is a completely different text.
- The version used is the copy in the Vatican Library reproduced in *WSXB* vol. II: 547–63, with a colophon by Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠.

Xu Guangqi xinglüe 徐光啟行略. A "Christian biography" of Xu Guangqi, dated 1678, by Philippe Couplet (Bo Yingli 伯應理, 1622–1693) and Zhang Xingyao 張星曜.

[36] On the attribution of this work, see chapter 3.

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TIDINGS FROM THE SOUTH
CHINESE COURT BUDDHISM AND OVERSEAS RELATIONS IN THE FIFTH CENTURY CE

Royal patronage has played an extremely important role in the history of Buddhism since its very beginning—the figure of the pious ruler as the protector of the Doctrine and the benefactor of the Order looms large in Buddhist tradition. As the *Saṅgha* developed from a sect of itinerant mendicant monks into a powerful movement having its permanent monastic centres, it became more and more dependent on large-scale sponsorship in terms of corporate landed property and the building and upkeep of temples and monasteries. Since elite support was essential, the large monasteries tended to be established in an urban environment, where wealth was concentrated, and preferably in or near the royal capital. If converted, or at least sympathetic to Buddhism, the king (with his entourage of relatives and courtiers) was expected to act as the *mahā-dānapati*, the “Great Lord of Gifts”. Apart from making lavish donations and ceremonially “feeding the *Saṅgha*” by organizing large-scale vegetarian meals in the palace compound, he would also support the propagation of the Doctrine, e.g. by inviting prominent masters or sponsoring the production of Buddhist texts. As a personal believer he would visit temples to take part in ceremonials, or even formally become a lay devotee by accepting the “Five Rules”. Apart from the obvious material benefits, royal patronage had great symbolic value in terms of status and influence: it made Buddhism “respectable”, and it strengthened its position *vis-à-vis* competitors.

It is therefore not surprising that great royal benefactors have come to play important roles in Buddhist lore and imagination, from King Bimbisāra of Magadha (of the Buddha’s own lifetime) to historical rulers like the third Maurya emperor Aśoka and the Kushan king Kaniṣka. In Buddhist legend, the life of Aśoka was elaborated into an epic story no doubt intended to serve as an inspiring example. Here we also find another important theme, for Aśoka is given the status of a universal
[22] ruler “Turner of the Wheel” (*cakravartin*)—in his case one of the third grade, which means that his territory was limited to the southern continent of Jambudvīpa, i.e. the one inhabited by human beings. By being

associated with the ancient Indian (and not specifically Buddhist) ideal of universal kingship, the figure of the pious Buddhist ruler acquired a whole set of semi-divine properties. Some of these concern his own person: the Buddhist *cakravartin* is, as it were, the worldly counterpart of the Buddha; his body, like the Buddha's, bears the thirty-two signs of the "Great Man". But the immense karmic merit that has earned him that status also reflects upon his relatives and his subjects: he has abundant male offspring; the land is fertile; the people are happy and enjoy lasting peace and prosperity. By this combination of two ideal figures—the royal sponsor of Buddhism and the universal ruler—a complex and powerful symbol was created; when Buddhism spread beyond the frontiers of its homeland the symbol was carried to different parts of Asia, including China.

In China, court Buddhism developed in the last decades of the fourth century CE, some three hundred years after the first recorded existence of Buddhism on Chinese soil. It is true that the first occurrence in a reliable historical source refers to some kind of (pseudo-)Buddhist cult at the court of a Han prince in 65 CE, but the context makes clear that it was little more than an exotic variety of Daoism. The famous story of the introduction of Buddhism, around the same time, as a result of the prophetic dream of the Han emperor Ming, does contain several elements that are typical of court Buddhism (the invitation of foreign monks; the introduction of sacred texts; the contest with Daoist rivals at the court; the emperor allowing the monks to establish their *vihāra* in an imperial villa), but the tale has already long ago been discarded as a piece of third century Buddhist propaganda. In fact, it belongs to a category of pious fiction that may be called "foundation myths": legends that were told about the origin of temples or monasteries to enhance their prestige—in this case the glorious origin of the White Horse Monastery (Baima si 白馬寺) in Luoyang. Another clearly fictitious account is situated two centuries later; it describes the miracles performed by the monk Kang Senghui 康僧會 at the court of Sun Quan 孫權, the ruler of the southern state of Wu, as a result of which Senghui was allowed to establish the first monastery south of the Yangze in present-day Nanjing, around the middle of the third century CE. Here again we are dealing with a characteristic foundation myth, which in this case glorifies the origin of the Jianchu si 建初寺 in the southern capital.[1]

[1] The Jianchu Monastery as such may well date from the middle of the third century; its existence is attested as early as CE 310 (biography of Śrīmitra in *CSZJJ* j. 13 p. 98a and

The actual beginning of imperial patronage in China formed part of
[23] a more general development of momentous importance in Chinese Buddhism: the penetration of Buddhism among the educated minority, and the simultaneous formation, within the *Saṅgha*, of a clerical elite of "scholar-monks", who on account of their intellectual and spiritual qualities were accepted in the highest circles, including the court. The process gained momentum around the middle of the fourth century, and it took place both in the territory of the Eastern Jin with its capital in Jiankang 建康 (the present Nanjing) and, albeit under rather different circumstances, in some of the "barbarian" states that had been established in northern China by conquerors of non-Chinese origin.

In the course of the fourth century, elite Buddhism in the north and the south each developed their own characteristics. In the south the formation of court Buddhism was a gradual process. It started with the activity of some leading Buddhist masters like Zhu Daoqian 竺道潛 (AD 286–374) and Zhi Dun 支遁 (AD 314–366), famous scholar-monks steeped in the tradition of ontological and metaphysical speculation known as "Dark Learning" (*xuanxue* 玄學). They moved in the highest circles, explaining the Mahāyāna doctrine of universal Emptiness in terms borrowed from that fashionable "Neo-Daoist" philosophy, and recruiting their followers and patrons from the great aristocratic families in the southern capital. During the Eastern Jin the political scene was dominated by factional struggle, the emperors being mere puppets in the hands of successive *junta* leaders, and since the middle of the fourth century the faction leaders generally were sympathetic to Buddhism. As a result, court Buddhism and imperial sponsorship became a regular feature of Buddhist life in Jiankang starting with Emperor Ai 哀帝 (r. 362–366 CE), but it should be remembered that in many cases signs of imperial patronage actually may reflect the interests and devotion of powerful ministers and generals rather than the emperor's personal piety. In 381 CE the position of Buddhism at the court was consolidated when the boy emperor Xiaowu formally accepted the Buddhist lay precepts and established a *vihāra* within the palace compound, and the last four decades of the Eastern Jin (c. 380–420) witnessed an increasing influence of Buddhism in court circles (including the imperial harem).

GSZ j. 1 p. 327c; cf. Robert Shift, *Biographies des moines éminents* (*Kao seng tchouan*) *de Houei-kiao*, Louvain, 1968, p. 42).

The sources mention many acts of patronage and devotion that were to become standard features of court Buddhism, such as the founding or enlargement of temples and monasteries by imperial decree; inviting prominent masters into the palace for preaching (occasionally also
[24] for healing and exorcism); imperial visits paid to Buddhist institutions, and donations given to individual masters. However, in spite of all these signs of imperial piety and largesse, southern court Buddhism was only in its incipient stage. There were no important new doctrinal developments since the formation of "*xuanxue* Buddhism" in the early decades of the fourth century. We do not yet find any institutions or instruments of clerical control and supervision, which later were to become a constant feature of religious policy, such as a system of selective testing aimed at safeguarding the quality of the *Saṅgha*; the fixing of quota for new ordinations in order to keep the growth of the clergy within limits, and the appointment of clerical "moderators" (*sengzheng* 僧正) with semi-official status, both male and female, who were responsible for the orderly behaviour of the monks and nuns within their jurisdiction. During the Eastern Jin two attempts were made (in CE 340 and in 402) by anti-Buddhist leaders to subject the *Saṅgha* to government control, but both were abortive.[2]

Southern court Buddhism was handicapped by the fact that ever since "the troubles of the Yongjia era" 永嘉之亂 (AD 307–313: the loss of northern China and the forced retreat of the Jin to the south) the Jin territory had been cut off from the main line of communication with Central Asia and India. The transcontinental Silk Road had its eastern terminal in present-day western Gansu, with its extension leading to Chang'an and Luoyang, all of which was occupied by "barbarian" states. As a result, no fresh impulses from the Western Regions reached the Eastern Jin court at Jiankang till the very end of the dynasty. In the north the contribution made by Indian and Central Asian missionaries was essential, for they came to China with new texts and new interpretations, and the systematic and well-organized translation of such texts under the ruler's auspices became a central element in court Buddhism.

Nothing similar happened in Jiankang. In CE 302, during the exodus to the south, the Kuchean master Śrīmitra had been welcomed by the metropolitan elite as an exotic guest, but he is not known to have had any relations with the court, and he only translated three collections of

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[2] For the controversy of CE 340 about the autonomy of the *Saṅgha* see my *Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden, 1972), pp. 106–108 and 160–163; for the incident of CE 402 see *ib.*, pp. 231–238.

magical spells, For other translation activities during the Eastern Jin we have to wait till the last years of the dynasty (early fifth century), when the Indian missionary Guṇabhadra and his Chinese collaborators (among whom we also find the famous pilgrim Faxian 法顯) produced a number of Chinese versions, and even then it is not clear to what extent the court was involved.

It was not in the south but in some of the northern states that court [25] Buddhism became fully developed in the late fourth and early fifth century: in Chang'an under the rulers of the proto-Tibetan Former Qin (AD 350–394) and Later Qin (AD 384–417), and, somewhat later, in the northwestern state of Northern Liang (AD 401–439) in present-day Gansu. The nature of this northern court Buddhism was quite different from the more diffuse patronage exercised by the faction leaders and their imperial puppets in the southern capital. In spite of their far-going sinicization the northern rulers still exhibited some traits inherited from their tribal background, and one of these was a tradition of strong, even despotic personal leadership. This also defined their attitude towards Buddhism, which was characterized by a direct and personal involvement in Buddhist activities (including large translation projects), coupled with a high degree of state control and supervision of the *Saṅgha*.

The development had started in CE 379 with the arrival of the great scholar-monk Dao'an 道安 in Chang'an (as a highly valued prisoner of war), and his activities as Buddhist leader, court chaplain and adviser in the service of Fu Jian 苻堅, the ruler of the Former Qin. The combination of Dao'an's untiring erfort, imperial sponsorship, and a favourable geopolitical situation (the Former Qin received tribute missions from several oasis states along the Silk Route) proved to be most fruitful. It led to the arrival of many foreign missionaries from northern India and Central Asia, large-scale translation work, and an influx of new ideas that constitute a turning point in early Chinese Buddhism.

As is well-known, all this reached its climax under the rulers of the Later Qin, especially the fervently Buddhist Yao Xing 姚興 (r. CE 394–416). The arrival in Chang'an of the famous Kuchean master Kumārajīva in CE 401 marked the beginning of an amazing program of court-sponsored translation activity. In eight or nine years time Kumārajīva and his team of hundreds of assistants, editors and scribes turned out more than a hundred texts, totalling some four hundred *juan*, in a monastery established by Yao Xing in one of the imperial parks. Kumārajīva and his disciples were convinced Mahāyānists, and they actively propagated and defended its teachings—in fact, it seems that only then the Chinese became clearly aware of the distinction between the two Vehicles. At the same time Hīnayāna

Buddhism (notably of the Sarvāstivāda school) was amply represented in Chang'an by several learned Abhidharma and Vinaya specialists: Buddhabhadra from Kapilavastu, and Sanghadeva, Dharmayaśas, Puṇyatara, Buddhayaśas and Vimalākṣa, all from Kashmir, They too were very active as translators under imperial auspices. Occasionally tensions and disputes arose between the defenders of the Mahāyāna and some of these Indian masters, not only on doctrinal issues—the stem Kashmir disciplinarians also objected against the worldly life-style and moral laxity of Kumārajīva
[26] and his followers, "more than three thousand monks, who all frequented the palace, and on a large scale engaged in worldly activities".[3] Yao Xing himself actively took part in doctrinal discussions, also in writing; he personally attended translation sessions; and of course he was primarily responsible for the "libertarianism" of the monks at his court—after all it was he who had forced or persuaded Kumārajīva to engender male offspring, supplying him with ten consorts from the imperial harem, and when he appointed the monk Senglüe 僧䂮 to the post of clerical moderator (*sengzheng* 僧正, *sengzhu* 僧主), he provided him with a generous salary, the right to use two carriages, and a retinue of twenty lay acolytes. And, as noted by Senglüe's biographer: "This marked the beginning of the (appointment of) clerical moderators [in China]". On the same occasion Yao Xing appointed an assistant moderator (with the title *lezhong* 樂眾 "He who Gladdens the Order") and two Recorders (錄).[4]

There are other instances of Yao Xing's autocratic interference in monastic life, in defiance of the Vinaya rules, As he wanted to employ the talents of two of Kumārajīva's disciples, he had their cassocks confiscated and ordered them to accept official appointment (interestingly using a typical Mahāyāna argument: they should abandon the selfish monastic ideal of the *Arhat*, and seek the way of the Bodhisattva who may use every means to help the suffering world). From some interesting documents that have been preserved we see how Kumārajīva and both moderators had to use all their eloquence to have this decision revoked.[5] On another occasion he personally interfered in the *Saṅgha* decision to excommunicate Buddhabhadra (no doubt a sordid affair, but formally speaking an internal clerical procedure, and in keeping with monastic canon law).[6]

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[3] *CSZJJ* j. 14, p. 103c.

[4] *GSZ* j. 6, p. 363b.

[5] Cf. *GSZ* j. 6, pp. 364b–365a and the documents preserved in *HMJ* j. 11, pp. 73c–75a.

[6] Cf. *CSZJJ* j. 14, pp. 103c–104a; for a somewhat different and more detailed version see *GSZ* j. 2, p. 335a–b (Robert Shih, op. cit., p. 44), The real motive behind the expulsion

On a much smaller scale the same kind of autocratic sponsorhip developed in the far northwest, in the Northern Liang state that from CE 401 to 433 was ruled by Juqu Mengxun 沮渠蒙遜, of Xiongnu descent, with his capital at Zhangye 張掖 in central Gansu. The Northern Liang controlled the eastern extension of the Silk Road, a region that had been exposed to Buddhism since at least the early third century CE, but there is little
[27] evidence of earlier court sponsorship. Juqu Mengxun was a vassal of Yao Xing, and we may assume that he followed the latter's example in establishing what must have come close to a "Buddhist state". During his reign several foreign missionaries and translators came to work in Zhangye, the most prominent being the Indian Mahāyāna master Dharmakṣema, who, among many other scriptures, made the first translation of the huge and very important *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*. He produced some twenty texts totalling more than 140 *juan*, at the same time acting as a kind of court magician in the service of the Xiongnu ruler. The latter's nephew Juqu Jingsheng 沮渠京聲 (also known as "the Marquis of Anyang" 安陽侯) was a Buddhist devotee who had acquired sufficient knowledge of Sanskrit to make his own translations. The Buddhist fervour of the ruling Juqu clan no doubt was shared by members of the Chinese elite in that region, as is proved by the rich decoration of the earliest cave temples in Gansu that date from the Northern Liang period.

Summarizing we may say that in the general situation of court-sponsored Buddhism in the early fifth century the north predominated. Court Buddhism in the southern empire was still in the course of development, and it was hampered by cultural isolation. The most important and vital centres were to be found at the courts of Yao Xing and Juqu Mengxun. However, in spite of all this activity the position of Buddhism in these northern states was precarious, for one of the main reasons of its success—the strong personal involvement of the ruler—also constituted its weakest spot. The states were unstable and short-lived, and in this autocratic system the fall of a local dynasty could seal the fate of Buddhism. And this is precisely what happened: within twenty years the whole situation was reversed. After Yao Xing's death (416) court Buddhism in Chang'an still flourished under his successor Yao Hong 姚泓, but two years later the Later Qin went down in bloodshed and chaos,

appears to have been Buddhabhadra's opposition to Kumārajīva's Mahāyāna teachings and to his worldly life-style, but formally he was accused of having made a show of his clairvoyance, which indeed according to the *Vinaya* is a major transgression warranting excommunication.

and the general who established a weak succession state (the Xia 夏) was not interested in Buddhism. The leading monks in the capital were dispersed, and this meant the end of Chang'an as a great Buddhist centre till its revival in Sui times.

In the meantime the Tuoba state of the (Northern) Wei had been expanding from its power base in northern Shanxi, with its capital in Pingcheng 平城 (the present Datong). The first Tuoba rulers conquered most of northern China, and in CE 439 the third Wei emperor Taiwu annexed the Northern Liang territory. In accordance with the Wei policy of large-scale population transfer, the victorious Taiwudi had tens of thousands of people (including three thousand monks) deported from Gansu and settled in his own metropolitan region.

The consequences would have been less serious if the Wei ruler had
[28] been sympathetic to Buddhism, but that was by no means the case. In matters of policy Emperor Taiwu relied upon the guidance of his able and trusted minister Cui Hao 崔浩 (AD 381–450), who played a central role in the organization of the Wei government along Chinese lines. Cui Hao was a staunch Confucianist and fervently anti-Buddhist, and he is said to have spared no effort to convince the emperor of the false and subversive nature of Buddhism. At the same time Taiwu increasingly came under the influence of the Daoist master Kou Qianzhi 寇謙之, who urged the emperor to eradicate the "barbarian" faith, and instead adopt his own brand of reformed Daoism. The first repressive measures were promulgated in 438, and in 445 the anti-Buddhist policy culminated in the first full-scale persecution of Buddhism in Chinese history, which lasted nine years (AD 445–454) and led to the destruction of countless temples and monasteries. The repression was ended by Taiwudi's successor, but a climate of terror had been created and it was only in the 'seventies that the basis was laid for the flourishing of the state-controlled Buddhism which eventually became the hallmark of the Tuoba-Wei. Its full development only took place after the shift of the capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang in CE 494.

All this shows that northern court Buddhism went through a deep crisis that lasted several decades. The loss was compensated, however, by the development of a full-fledged court Buddhism in the southern capital, where since 420 a palace revolution led by the general Liu Yu 劉裕 had ended the Eastern Jin and installed the (Liu-)Song dynasty (AD 420–478). Especially during the long reign of the third Song emperor Wendi (r. 424–454) Jiankang became the most vital centre of Buddhist activity in China. This shift had important consequences, and not only for the internal

development of elite Buddhism in China. As we shall see, the image of Song China as an empire ruled by a pious monarch of almost Aśokan proportions was propagated far beyond the borders of China, and became the vehicle of a curious kind of diplomatic messages sent to Jiankang by "barbarians of the Southern Seas".

Under Wendi, and often under his personal patronage, all the elements of metropolitan Buddhism that had already developed during the Eastern Jin were continued on a grand scale: there was a spate of temple and monastery building; prominent masters were invited to lecture in the palace or to perform rituals, and the emperor paid visits to temples. He did not formally accept the lay precepts; according to an interesting passage in *Gaoseng zhuan* he felt that he could not do so because as an emperor he was obliged to perform sacrificial rites where animals were killed, which
[29] was incompatible with the commandment not to kill any living beings.[7] But in all other respects he became the first example of a personal imperial patron of Buddhism in the annals of the southern dynasties, and a modest precursor of the Liang emperor Wu (r. CE 502–549), the "Aśoka of China". Like Liang Wudi, he appears to have been convinced that Buddhist morals could contribute to peace and order in society. On one occasion he is reported to have said: "If only the people of Our realm all were purified by the transforming influence (of Buddhism), We would be able to realize Great Peace (*taiping* 太平) without any effort—what more would there be to do?"[8]

Occasionally we also get some glimpses of the other face of court Buddhism: restrictive measures, control and interference. In CE 435 Wendi decreed that henceforward temple building and the casting of bronze images only were allowed with government approval, and that without such an official permit the buildings and statues were to be confiscated.[9] At two occasions (in CE 435 and 458) Wendi and his successor had the *Saṅgha* "screened" and hundreds of monks defrocked.[10] Somewhat later the first clerical moderators were appointed, both for the metropolitan region and for the empire as a whole. After in 465 emperor Ming had founded a temple for the well-being of the dynasty, he granted its abbot a huge salary, five attendants, a staff of twenty clerks, and the right to

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[7] *GSZ* j. 3 (biography of Guṇavarman), p. 341a (Robert Shih, op. cit., p. 130).
[8] *GHMJ* j. 1, p. 100a.
[9] *HMJ* j. 11, p. 69a; cf. *Ss* j. 97, p. 2386.
[10] AD 435: cf. *Ss* j. 97, p. 2386; CE 458: *ib.*, p. 2387; also *GHMJ* j. 6, pp. 125c–126a, and j. 24, p. 272b.

use a carriage, clearly following the example set by the Later Qin ruler Yao Xing.[11]

Another new element was the phenomenon of public debate on doctrinal topics, usually in the form of an exchange of written critical essays. It had already been practised in the north (with Kumārajīva as the main arbiter), but starting with Wendi's reign it became a regular feature of southern court Buddhism. The subjects of the discussion were some "hot issues" such as the immortality or mortality of the soul; the nature of karmic retribution; "sudden" versus "gradual" Enlightenment, and the fundamental unity (or at least compatibility) of the Three Doctrines—Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism. When in CE 436 the learned monk Huilin 慧琳 published a highly controversial essay in which he, among other things, came close to denying the reality of karmic retribution, it led to a heated debate in which the emperor and some of the most prominent court dignitaries and scholars took part. Emperor Wen liked the essay and its author to such an extent that he not only prevented Huilin's excom-
[30] munication, but also made him a trusted and powerful adviser.[12] The emperor was also deeply interested in the thesis of "sudden Enlightenment" taught by the famous Zhu Daosheng 竺道生 (a former collaborator of Kumārajīva); after Daosheng's death in 434 he personally searched for a worthy successor able to lecture on that abstruse subject.[13] It may well be that the emperor's involvement in such disputes was indeed inspired by the Later Qin example, about which he easily could get first-hand information, for at least four of Kumārajīva's leading disciples had found their way to Jiankang after the fall of Chang'an. And they were not the only Buddhist refugees from the north: in 454, after the Tuoba Wei had conquered the Northern Liang territory, the "Marquis of Anyang" Juqu Jingsheng came to settle in Jiankang, where he became a prolific translator.

A major development took place in the field of the translation and publication of Buddhist texts. In the early fifth century Jiankang became the main centre of translation activity, mostly under imperial auspices, while in the north it had practically come to a standstill. In the Northern Wei state only two foreign translators are known to have been active before the end of the fifth century, producing no more than six texts, and it was

[11] *GSZ* j. 7 (biography of Daomeng 道猛), p. 374a.

[12] *Ss* j. 97, pp. 2388–91; cf. the documents pertaining to Huilin's treatise in *HMJ* j. 1, pp. 17c–21c.

[13] Cf. *GSZ* j. 7 (biography of Daoyou 道猷), p. 374c.

only after the transfer of the Wei court to Luoyang (AD 494) that it would catch up with the south.

As a result, Jiankang also became a meeting place of foreign missionaries. During Wendi's reign at least seven Indian masters presented themselves in Jiankang; some of them were personally welcomed, or even invited, by the emperor. Of these six, two—Dharmamitra (arr. 430) and Kālayaśas (arr. 424)—had come via the land route. The other and more important missionaries all had made the journey to China by sea, disembarking at Nanhai 南海 (Canton) and then following the main inland route to the north; across the Meiling Pass; downstream along the Gan River, and via Lake Poyang to the Jiangnan region. They represent the first generation of Indian masters arriving from the "Southern Seas". The Vinaya specialist Buddhajīva from Kashmir arrived in Jiankang in CE 423; he was soon followed by other missionaries like Guṇavarman (who had been staying on Java before he was invited to come to China); the Abhidharma master Saṅghavarman, and Guṅabhadra who sailed from Ceylon to Canton in CE 435.

The maritime connection, of which this type of Buddhist missionary movement formed a part, had important consequences for the development of Buddhism in the far south, in the Canton region. The sources
[31] contain little evidence for the presence of Buddhism in that harbour city before the late fourth century—in fact, it appears that in earlier times the eastern terminal of Indian seaborne trade was not Canton but Jiaozhi 交趾 (near the present Hanoi; known as "Kattigara" to the geographers of Roman antiquity: "a large emporium of the Thinae, and the borderline of the unknown world").[14] But in the course of the fourth century that role had been taken over by Nanhai, that was more conveniently situated (it should be remembered that in early medieval times the coastline still came close to the walled city, somewhat east of the present Whampoa).[15] Buddhist biographical sources contain references to the activity of monks and nuns and the existence of monasteries since the early fifth century, and to missionaries travelling to Canton aboard Indian merchant ships. At the end of his homeward journey the pilgrim Faxian would also have disembarked there, if the large merchantman on which he was sailing had not been blown to the Shandong coast by a gale.

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[14] Martianus Heracleensis (second century CE), *Periplus maris externi* (cf. Richard Hennig, *Terrae Incognitae*, Leiden, 1944, p. 86.).

[15] Cf. *Guangdong lishi ditu ji*, Guangzhou: Guangdong sheng ditu chubanshe, 1995, p. 86.

The relation between Buddhism and overseas trade is well-attested. The theme of the rich merchant who sails on his ship to distant treasure islands is a stereotype in Buddhist tales, as is the Buddhist monk who travels aboard such a ship. Chinese Buddhist sources allow us some interesting glimpses of that connection. When he was living in Jiankang, Guṇavṛddhi was still popular with the "merchants from Nanhai" who visited him in great numbers with rich presents.[16] We hear of a certain Zhu Pole 竺婆勒 (Bhallaka?) "who had been living in Guangzhou for a long time, often coming and going there in search of profit". His son Jinjie 法度 (Kiṅka?) later became a monk with the religious name of Fadu 法度, and the founder of a "heretical" sect of Hīnayāna fundamentalists that gained many adherents, especially among nuns, in the Jiangnan region.[17] And we have some intriguing references to an Indian or Singhalese trader and ship's captain called Nandin, who appears to have been an active lay Buddhist and a friend of the missionary Guṇavarman. It was on his ship that Guṇavarman sailed from Java to Canton shortly after CE 425, and it also was Nandin who on two occasions shipped groups of Singhalese nuns to China (the second time probably at Guṇavarman's special request)—one of the most curious episodes in the early history of the female Order in
[32] China.[18] Captain Nandin appears to have known both Sanskrit and Chinese, for he is credited with the translation of three Mahāyāna scriptures.[19] He may have found the Indian originals in Canton, for a later (sixth century) missionary complains that many Sanskrit texts are left behind in the two main temples in Guangzhou without ever reaching the capital.[20]

The upsurge of long-distance maritime trade on the South China coast coupled with the influx of foreign Buddhist missionaries in the early fifth century was not only a result of the internal situation in China. If we take a wider look and place them in their South and Southeast Asian context, it becomes clear that they formed part of a historical process of a much

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16 *CSZJJ* j. 14, p. 107a; *GSZ* j. 3, p. 345b (Robert Shih, op. cit., p. 159).

17 Cf. Sengyou's account of the irregular practices of the "Hīnayāna heretic" Zhu Fadu in *CSZJJ* j. 5, pp. 40c–41a; condensed version in *GSZ* j. 1, p. 329c (appended to the biography of Buddhayaśas); R. Shih, op. cit., p. 59.

18 Cf. Kathryn A. A. Cissell, "The *Pi-ch 'iu-ni chuan*: Biographies of Famous Chinese Nuns from 319–516 C.E." (doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972), pp. 60–69.

19 The texts translated by Nandin are mentioned in the two Sui catalogues (*ZJML* I of CE 594, j. 1, p. 116c and *ZJML* II of CE 602, j. 1, p. 152b) and in Tang catalogues *DTNDL* (j. 3, p. 247c) and *KYSJL* (j. 3, p. 509a). In both Sui catalogues the translator is expressly called "the foreign ship's captain Zhu Nanti".

20 *DTNDL* j. 5, p. 274a: statement made in a manuscript left behind by Paramārtha at his death in CE 569.

larger scope: the first wave of so-called "indianization" of parts of continental and insular Southeast Asia in the late fourth and early fifth century of our era.

In northern and central India this was the highday of the Gupta empire, a period of cultural flourishing and territorial expansion, especially during the reign of Candragupta II Vikramāditya (c. 380–c. 415 CE)—the India that was visited by Faxian and that he described in such positive terms. The ostentatious life-style at the courts (both of the Gupta emperor and of the many local rulers under his overlordship) and the material prosperity of the urban elite had created a market for luxury products, and part of these were supplied by overseas trade. Archaeological evidence has shown that the key role in this seaborne trade and in the overseas dissemination of Indian culture was played by local rulers and merchant communities on the southeast coast of the Indian subcontinent, precisely during this period. The earliest inscriptions (in Sanskrit, using a south Indian variety of script) that have been found on the Malay Peninsula, west Java, east Kalimantan, and in Cambodia and southern Vietnam date from the late fourth and the fifth century, and data from Chinese sources confirm that the first wave of Indianization gained momentum around that time.

Ceylon (Siṃhala, Sri Lanka) was another source of dissemination through this whole region. Due to its strategic position it had been an important centre and entrepot of long-distance maritime trade since early times, and it played a special role in the diffusion of Buddhism, as it was the only exclusively Buddhist state in South Asia.

[33] As the territories of the local potentates who adopted the Indian model were situated along title main trading routes in Southeast Asia, their policy of "indianization" was no doubt partly inspired by commercial interests, but also other factors were at work. The imitation of classical Indian models in court life, administration and the arts must have greatly enhanced the king's prestige, and both brahmin priests and Buddhist monks could provide him with supernatural legitimation and divine protection by their rituals and prayers.

We shall not attempt geographical identification, a subject that has given rise to a vast literature and endless speculation. There is little concrete evidence to go by, for the early inscriptions only rarely contain toponymical information, and the Chinese transcriptions of the names of "the states of the Southern Barbarians" mostly are no more than approximations. Only in the case of a few larger and more stable states or regions like Linyi 林邑, (southeast Vietnam); Funan 扶南 (Cambodia and the Mekong basin) and Shepo 闍婆 (Java) the identity is fairly well-established.

As regards the location of the many other smaller and ephemeral kingdoms mentioned in Chinese sources, not even a shadow of consensus has been reached by the authorities in the field. For our present purpose it is important to note that by the beginning of the fifth century many such polities had emerged, and that even during this early stage they had developed their own Indian-style system of diplomatic relations, also with the southern Chinese court. They sent their envoys to the Song court in Jiankang, and their messages turned around a specifically Buddhist theme: the glorification of the Song emperor as an ideal Buddhist monarch, and of the Song empire as an ideal Buddhist state.

The most illuminating example of such maritime cross-cultural intercourse is found in the biography of the Indian missionary Guṇavarman (AD 367–421).[21] It combines all the aspects we have touched upon so far: overseas connections between Ceylon, Java and Canton; the conversion of a Javanese chieftain; Song imperial patronage and monks being used as diplomatic messengers, and the image of China as an attractive mission field.

Guṇavarman came from a high-class family; he is said to have been a member of the ruling house of Kashmir. After having roamed through various parts of India and after having spent some time in Ceylon, he sailed to Java. There he converted a local king called "Poduojia" 婆多加
[34] (Bhadraka??) and the queen-mother.[22] He spent several years as a highly respected court priest, giving moral guidance and displaying his mastery of magical formulas. According to the story the local people massively followed the king's example and embraced the Buddhist faith. Guṇavarman's fame spread through the whole region and eventually also reached the Song court. In CE 424 two prominent monks persuaded the Song emperor Wen to send a clerical delegation to Java in order to invite Guṇavarman to come to Jiankang. When they met him, Guṇavarman was about to leave Java for some other state in the region (probably Linyi), but he accepted the invitation as a sign of karmic destiny. As has been mentioned above, he crossed the sea aboard Nandin's merchantman. After

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[21] *GSZ* j. 3, pp. 340a–342b; R. Shih, op. cit., p. 125–137; incomplete translation by Éd. Chavannes, "Guṇavarman", in *T'oung Pao* 5 (1904), pp. 193–206. Shorter biography in *CSZJJ* j. 14, p. 104a–c.

22 It would be tempting to associate the state of this king "Poduojia" with the indianized kingdom of Tārumā that has left a few inscriptions on west Java dating from the late fourth or early fifth century CE, but this would be mere speculation. Moreover, the section on the Southern Barbarians of the *Ss* mentions two more fifth-century states that appear to have been situated on Java; "Heluodan" 呵羅單 (*Ss* j. 97, p. 2381) and "Shepopoda" 闍婆婆達 (Yavavardhana?) (*ib*., p. 2383).

his arrival in Canton the local authorities received an imperial decree ordering them to provide for his journey to the capital at public expense. In Jiankang he was greatly honoured by the emperor and the metropolitian elite, and he became active as a translator, but he appears also to have maintained his overseas relations through his friend Nandin. Thus Guṇavarman's life allows us a rare glimpse of a maritime world in movement, and of China's involvement in it.

The first recorded diplomatic mission in which Buddhism played a key role arrived in Jiankang at the very end of the Eastern Jin, somewhere between CE 405 and 418. On that occasion a large Buddha image made of jade was presented to the emperor by a monk called Tanmoyi 曇摩抑 (Dharmayukta?), acting as an envoy (or, in Chinese terms, as a "tribute bearer") of the king of Ceylon.[23] Emperor An had the image placed in the prestigious Waguan Temple 瓦官寺, where it was exhibited as one of its most famous treasures till the wanton destruction of the statue around CE 500.[24] We may assume that the present was intended to express the Singhalese ruler's admiration for the flourishing state of Buddhism in China, but unfortunately the Chinese sources do not quote or paraphrase the
[35] text of the "(tribute) memorial" (*biao* 表) that no doubt accompanied the statue.

However, this only marked the beginning of tribute missions from the South that soon became a regular feature of court life in Jiankang, and some of these are much better documented. The section on the "Southern Barbarians" in the official history of the Song dynasty (which only lasted fifty-four years) lists no less than thirty-five of such embassies. Sometimes the country or region of origin is clear, but mostly the envoys are sent by obscure states like "Heluotuo" 訶羅陀; "Heluodan" 呵羅單, "Pohuang" 婆皇; "Poda" 婆達; "Panpan" 槃槃 and "Jintuoli" 近陀利, the identity of which is little more than conjectural. There is a remarkable concentration of such missions in the period between CE 428 and 438: seventeen embassies in only eleven years. I cannot think of any explanation for this "rush on Jiankang".

In a number of cases the texts of the "tribute" memorials are quoted at length, and occasionally the imperial reaction, in the form of an "edict"

[23] *GSZ* j. 13, p. 410b; *Ls* j. 54, p. 800; *Ns* j. 78, p. 1964. The statue presented by the Singhalese king probably was a copy of the famous jade Buddha in the great temple in Anurādhapura that was described by Faxian.

[24] According to *Ls* j. 54, p. 800, the extravagant sixth ruler of the Southern Qi known as Marquis Dohghun 東昏 (r. 499–501) had the statue broken into pieces and made into jade ornaments for his favourite concubine.

(*zhao* 詔) or an "order of investiture" (*ceming* 策命) are cited as well.[25] The memorials are written in what may be called "Buddhist scriptural Chinese", the characteristic written idiom that had been developed by translation teams since late Han times, and that had become fully standardized by the beginning of the fifth century. We may assume that they were translated after their arrival in China, either in Canton or, more probably, in Jiankang. The fact that the translators were perfectly familiar with Buddhist terminology suggests that they were made by monks.

In some cases the names of the envoys have been recorded. They all bear more or less recognizable Sanskrit names like "Jayasena" or "Rudragupta". It is interesting to note that in five cases the envoy's name is preceded by the "ethnic marker" Zhu 竺 indicating that they were Indians employed by indigenous rulers in Southeast Asia as advisers and diplomats. They were not all Buddhists (in fact, the ambassador of the obscure Javanese kingdom of Heluodan is even named "Viṣṇu"), but judging from their names some of them were, and one envoy appears to have been a *shami* 沙彌 (*śramaṇera*, a Buddhist novice). The king of Ceylon is said to have sent a delegation consisting of "four priests and two lay believers", but that
[36] is not surprising in view of the dominating position of Buddhism at the Anurādhapura court.

In accordance with the tribute protocol the envoys arrived with presents consisting of "local products". These only rarely have a Buddhist flavour, and again it is not fortuitous that in the two recorded cases (the jade Buddha mentioned above, and "an ivory statue on a high platform" presented by king Mahānāman in CE 428)[26] they both came from Ceylon. The other presents listed all belong to the general category of valuable exotic products: diamond rings; red and white parrots; gold and silverwork, and fine cotton cloth (*gubei* 古貝 = *karpāsa*) "from India".

However, there can be no doubt about the specifically Buddhist character of the texts themselves. They mostly start with a few lines in praise of the Buddha, or of the Three Treasures (the Buddha, the Doctrine and the

[25] The memorials presented by the southern envoys as well as the imperial proclamations are reproduced or quoted in the sections on the Southern Barbarians in *Ss* j. 97, pp. 2377–2385; *NQs* j. 58, pp. 1014–1017; *Ls* j. 54, pp. 783–800. It is curious that several eulogizing memorials that figure in the *Ls* are almost identical with those found in the *Ss*. There is almost verbatim correspondence, apart from some appropriate adjustments like "Great Liang" instead of "Great Song". This mystification is hard to explain. It may be that the authentic Liang materials had been lost, and that the compilers of the Liang dynastic history chose to fill the gap by "borrowing" the Song texts.

[26] *Ss* j. 97, p. 2384.

monastic Order), which is very common in Buddhist treatises, and also the other parts of the texts are full of Buddhist terminology. The reputation of the Song emperor as a pious Buddhist ruler apparently made Buddhist rhetoric the most obvious vehicle for communication with the Chinese court. This must have been a deliberate "strategic choice", for with the exception of Ceylon Buddhism was by no means the dominant religion in the Indianized states of Southeast Asia (or, for that matter, in India itself). As is shown by archeological and epigraphical data, for their supernatural legitimation the indigenous rulers had turned to orthodox (Vedic) Brahmanism and to the cults of Śiva and Viṣṇu, and Buddhism only played a minor role. But China was considered a Buddhist country, so it had to be addressed in Buddhist terms.

The Chinese emperor is addressed or referred to in ways that to Chinese readers must have seemed rather exotic, using terms like "Ever Victorious Son of Heaven" (*changsheng tianzi* 常勝天子); "Most Blissful Son of Heaven" (*daji tianzi* 大吉天子), or "Saintly King" (*shengwang* 聖王, a term that in Buddhist texts usually denotes a universal *cakravartin* ruler). In one document the emperor is called "the Divine King Wuyou", an interesting identification, for *wuyou* 無憂, "No-Sorrow", is the standard translation of the name of Aśoka.[27] China is called Zhendan 震旦, Cīnasthāna, but more attention is paid to the Chinese imperial capital as the seat of supreme power; it is not called Jiankang but always, with some variations, referred to as "the capital city in/of (the province of) Yangzhou". This apparently was the name by which Jiankang was known among foreign traders, just as they used to call Canton *Zhina* 支那, "Cīna".[28]

[37] The eulogistic part of the memorials generally contains three main themes: (1) the power and glory of the emperor as a universal monarch and a paragon of virtue; (2) his Buddhist piety, and (3) the ideal conditions prevailing in the Song empire. It usually is followed by (4) a profession of loyalty and submission as a vassal.

(1) The glory of the Son of Heaven is, expectedly, praised in terms that are directly derived from *cakravartin* lore:

> You, the Most Blissful Son of Heaven, are residing in the great country of Yangzhou of the Great Song, continuing the work of former sages; in the whole continent of Jambudvīpa there is none who does not come to submit

[27] Second memorial of king Sthiravarman of Heluodan, *Ss* j. 97, p. 2381.

[28] *XGYT* p. 371c, compiler's gloss: "The Indians call Canton 'Cīna', and the imperial capital 'Mahācīna'" (the "capital" here of course referring to the Tang capital Chang'an).

> (to your authority) . . . When the Saintly King has appeared he is fully provided with his four armies (of elephant-riders; cavalry; chariots and foot-soldiers), and he is preceded and followed by innumerable guardsmen . . . When the Sainly King goes out to make a tour he is followed by people from the whole world . . . The king's body is lovely like the sun at dawn; the all-pervading bounty of his kindness is like a great (rain)cloud; the saints and sages whose task he has inherited are like the gods of Sun and Moon. He truly is the most superior one in that (country of) Cīnasthāna . . .[29]

(2) It goes without saying that the Song emperor, being a *cakravartin*, is a shining example of Buddhist piety. He has filled his territory with relic shrines, temples and monasteries; surrounding himself with (Buddhist) scholars he propagates the true Doctrine, spreading it like clouds that produce a gentle rain. He is filled with tenderness and compassion towards all beings; "he personally practises the Five Precepts; even where roads do not reach he will board the Vessel of the Great Doctrine to rescue those who are drowning". He is protected by gods and spirits; like the Buddha himself he has vanquished Māra, the evil one. He is compared to the god Brahmā—another metaphor for universal rule, for "Brahmā the Lord of the World" (*Sahāṃpati*) is the highest divine authority in the universe of sensory perception. In fact, the Song emperor really is an *avatāra*: "though (seeming to be) a human being, you actually are a god who has incarnated himself to protect the world, saving the world by your great compassion".[30] Occasionally the Indian hyperbolic idiom is mixed with some more familiar Confucian stereotypes: the emperor is assisted by able and uncorruptible ministers; his virtue is in agreement with the intention of Heaven, and by his benevolence (*ren*) he protects all within the Four Seas. These are either very free sinicizing renderings, or additions made by the trans-
[38] lators in an attempt to combine the best of two worlds.

(3) Passages glorifying the splendour of the Song capital occur in almost every memorial. They describe the beauty of the city and its palatial buildings; the prosperity and happiness of the people, and the mighty Yangzi and other rivers on which the livelihood of the people depends. One example may suffice:

> [The capital] is on all sides surrounded by towns, villages and settlements of every order. The outer and inner walls and the spacious buildings are like the palaces of the *Trāyastriṃśa* gods;[31] the palace halls tall and large,

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29 First memorial of king Sthiravarman of Heluodan, CE 430; *Ss* j. 97, pp. 2380–81.

30 Memorial of king Pishapomo (Vijayavarman?) of Heluodan, CE 433; *Ss* j. 97, p. 2381.

31 The gods of the fourth sphere of the Realm of Desire, whose heaven is situated on the top of Mt. Sumeru; they are ruled by the god Indra who resides in his gorgeous palace-city

> the storied pavilions impressive and richly decorated … (The inhabitants) of your territory are prosperous and happy, and free from any suffering … The people are virtuous and always blessed with good fortune. As you are situated on the north side of the Himalayas, the (melting) water of its snows is running down to form a hundred streams overflowing with clear water of eight tastes. Flowing everywhere twisting and turning they find their way to the great sea, and all living beings are free to make use of them. Of all the states this is the most excellent and superior one: it is called the Capital of Yang(zhou) of the Great Song in the country of Cīnasthāna …[32]

Other elements that are mentioned in similar descriptions are the wide and well-levelled main streets full of traffic; the rich clothes and ornaments worn by both men and women, and the abundance of valuable goods on the markets.

(4) A humble profession of loyalty on the part of the vassal was of course part of the tribute ceremonial, but the memorials presented by the southern extremes in their expression of devotion and subservience. For instance, in a memorial of CE 430:

> I humbly consider Your Majesty to be my true lord. I, your subject, am king of the country of Heluotuo; my name is Sthiravarman. Respectfully I pay obeisance to you, Saintly King. Let the Great King know that this devotion of mine is of long standing, and not just (shown) for the present purpose … I, Sthiravarman, am an insignificant nobody—how would anyone know me?
> [39] That is why I have sent these two men in order to inform you about my trifling feelings …[33]

Or, in the message of the king of "Jiapili" 迦毘黎, somewhere on the east coast of India:

> My name is Candrapriya, of the lineage of king Qishe. Great King, may your saintly body be comfortable and in good health, and may all your ministers and officials enjoy peace and protection. I hereby turn this country of mine over to you in vassalage, with all its ministers, officials and common people, its mountains and rivers and its rare treasures. Stretching my five limbs at your feet I express my feelings of sincerity towards you, Great King … As this territory of mine is all yours, I shall obey your laws and in all things adopt your good ways of government …[34]

One state does not join in this chorus of adulation and self-depreciation: in the memorial presented by Kṣatriya Mahānāman, the king of Ceylon

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called Sudarśaṇa. The Trāyastriṃśa heaven is often used in Buddhist texts as a metaphor for incredible beauty and opulence.

32 Memorial of the king of Heluodan (cf. note 30).

33 *Ss* j. 97, p. 2381.

34 Memorial of king Candrapriya of "Jiapili", CE 428; *ib.*, p. 2385.

(AD 428), quite a different tone is struck. After having paid his perfunctory compliments to “the enlightened ruler of the Great Song” to whom all local kings (*fangwang* 方王) come with their presents, the Singhalese king memorizes how he and predecessors always have worshipped the Three Treasures and applied its noble and humane principles in government. He then concludes, as if speaking to a colleague:

> It is my wish to propagate the True Doctrine together with you, the Son of Heaven, so that even those who are hard to change will be converted. Therefore I have entrusted this mission to (these) four priests and two lay believers. . . . Please graciously convey your message to them when they return.[35]

We can think of various reasons why the tone of Mahānāman’s message (actually a proposal for a missionary joint venture) is so different from the adulatory memorials of the other rulers. Relative status may have played a role: Ceylon was a large and well-known state, not to be compared with the obscure petty kingdoms of Southeast Asia. It is significant that Mahānāman mentions the many tributary “local kings” without identifying himself with them. A second reason may be that, being a Buddhist monarch committed to the propagation of the Doctrine, his message focused on the missionary zeal which he (as he thought) shared with the Chinese emperor. In early sources no mention is made of any reaction to Mahānāman’s proposal on the part of the Chinese emperor. In Zhipan’s 志磐 thirteenth century Tiantai chronicle *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統記 we do find an entry stating that emperor Wen wrote to Mahānāman: “Here
[40] we only have very few Hīnayāna scriptures, so please let whatever you have in your country be copied and sent to us”,[36] but that text is very late, and I have not found any reference to the imperial reply in earlier sources.

In all the other cases we may be more suspicious. Unlike Ceylon, those states were not specifically Buddhist. Their wish to establish contacts with the Chinese court was not inspired by religious motives, and their use of Buddhist themes and terminology was little more than diplomatic window-dressing. Some passages reveal that both commercial and political interests were at stake.

For the Song court the commercial aspect was hardly relevant. In faraway Canton and Jiaozhi the overseas trade was thriving, and the central

[35] *Ss* j. 97, p. 2384.
[36] *FZTJ* j. 36, p. 344b.

government may have tapped some of its profits by taxation, but its effect upon the state revenue as a whole must have been minimal.

The court was supplied with exotic products through "tribute" embassies (actually a kind of ritualized barter trade), but for the emperor their symbolic value in terms of prestige and legitimation was far more important than any material profit derived from them.

For the rulers of the indianized states in Southeast Asia the situation was completely different. They were largely dependent on long-distance trade, and by the beginning of the fifth century the south China coast had become part of their trading network. The sudden avalanche of "tribute missions" to Jiankang during the first decades of that century had, above all, the character of promotion missions, adapted to Chinese ritual requirements, and using Buddhist rhetoric as a means of expression.

The few surviving memorials occasionally hint at those commercial interests:

> You allow all people to drink the water of your kindness; although I am far away, may I too enjoy the benefit of its supernatural bounty . . . If there is anything you need, just order it and I shall offer it to you . . .
>
> May you accept in good faith what (my envoy) brings forward, and may you grant whatever he is asking for.[37]

Or, even more overtly:

> (Apart from your protection) let there also be trade relations between us, (merchants) coming and going, without any prohibitions or obstruction . . .[38]

In a memorial of CE 484 in which Jayavarman, the king of Funan,
[41] reports about an act of piracy committed by the king of Linyi, the king's personal involvement in the China trade is explicitly mentioned:

> Some time ago I sent an emissary with (a cargo of) various merchandise to be sold in Canton. There the Indian monk Nāgasena went aboard my ship, as he wanted to come to Funan. However, on the high sea the wind blew the ship to Linyi, and then the king of that country took all my merchandise, as well as Nāgasena's personal belongings.

Apart from commercial interests, political considerations also appear to have played a role. In the same memorial Jayavarman declares that the pirate king has usurped the throne in Linyi, and he asks the emperor to

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[37] Memorial of king Shili Bulingqiepomo (Śri . . . Liṅgavarman?), CE 428; *Ss* j. 97, p. 2384.

[38] First memorial of king Sthiravannan (cf. note 29).

intervene and to restore the throne to its rightful owner—since Linyi should be considered a Chinese vassal state, the emperor would be fully entitled to do so. Of course this was a clever way to use the (largely fictional) Chinese overlordship to get rid of an aggressive neighbour state, but the attempt failed. The emperor was not inclined to send his troops into the steaming jungles of Vietnam; his answer was friendly but noncommittal, and no action was taken.[39]

The same kind of appeal for moral and/or military support is also found in some earlier memorials. In CE 430 king Sthiravarman of Heluotuo seeks protection against his rivals on Java:

> Formerly my state was flourishing, with a large population, and it was not oppressed by any other state, but now it has grown weak, and it is exposed to the aggressiveness of neighbouring countries. May you, Saintly King, graciously grant me protection from afar! . . . As a result (of your help) I shall no more be slighted and insulted by all those states—and it will also make your fame, Great King, heard everywhere.[40]

Actually for Sthiravarman the danger would not come from his neighbours but from his own family, Six years later, in a second memorial, he tells his pathetic story: he has suddenly been deposed and banished by his "evil son". He does not ask for military intervention, but he requests permission to buy Chinese arms (probably in Canton) through his trusted envoy Viṣṇu—an interesting request, for it implies that there was a ban on the purchase of arms for export.

> Now my life has been saved, thanks to the loyalty of this man Viṣṇu; it is
> hard to requite his kindness . . . I humbly wish that Your Majesty allow Viṣṇu
> [42] to purchase suits of armour, weapons, padded coats and horses. Please make
> arrangements for his timely return . . .[41]

In accordance with tribute protocol the Song emperor reacted to such memorials by issuing an edict praising the foreign ruler for his loyalty and submission, and/or by sending his own envoy to the foreign court with the text of an imperial diploma of investiture (*ceming*). Quotations from both types of documents have been preserved, and it is interesting to note that they in no way differ from the standard proclamations issued at such occasions. They do not contain any reference to the *cakravartin* ideal or to the emperor's sponsorship of Buddhism, nor do they mention the vassal's

[39] *Ib.*, pp. 1016–17.
[40] First memorial of king Sthiravannan; cf. note 29.
[41] Second memorial of king Sthiravarman; cf. note 27.

religious piety, Some of the envoys are given high-sounding military titles like "Awe inspiring General" or "Dragon-prancing General"—another traditional gesture. In his personal life the emperor may have been a true believer, but the role which he played as Son of Heaven belonged to the core of the Confucian ritual order, and that core has always remained impervious to Buddhist influence.

Diplomatic exchanges of this particular type appear to have been limited to the southern courts during the Six Dynasties period; the last recorded "messages from the South" using Buddhist panegyric date from the middle of the sixth century.[42] They had taken shape due to a combination of factors; on the Chinese side the influx of Indian missionaries with overseas contacts and the flourishing of court Buddhism in Jiankang, and, beyond China's borders, the rise of "indianized" polities in Southeast Asia; the development of their overseas trading networks, and their relations with the southern Chinese court.

In the late sixth century the whole situation changed in a dramatic way. With the unification of China under the first Sui emperor in CE 589 the seat of power was shifted to the north, and Chang'an and Luoyang became the centres of court Buddhism. In foreign relations the attention became focused on the western regions; exchanges with the Turks and Tibetans were far more inportant than the rare diplomatic contacts with the states of the southern seas. And Jiankang, the imperial metropole whose praise had been sung by the kings of the south, had ceased to exist.

In CE 589 the Sui conqueror had ordered the total dismantling of the metropole; its walls and buildings had been razed to the ground, and the site turned into rice fields. Like a Chinese Troy: *et periere ruinate.*

42 *Ls* j. 54, p. 793: two embassies from "Panpan", CE 546 and 551.

BUDDHIST *CHANHUI* AND CHRISTIAN CONFESSION IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CHINA

"A Recipe to Achieve Saintliness"

The feeling of guilt, the painful awareness of having wilfully transgressed the norms of moral conduct, forms of course part of human experience, and in the religious sphere the concept of sin, in the sense of a deliberate violation of rules that are imposed by higher beings or that form part of a cosmic order, is present in all major religions, as is the urge to eliminate it (or to escape from its consequences) by some kind of moral purification.

In China self-examination and self-accusation have a long history, both within and outside the religious sphere, and much has been written about it ever since Wolfram Eberhard in his pioneering study *Guilt and Sin in Traditional China* (1967) showed the importance of interiorised guilt in Chinese culture. Other landmarks are the studies by Wu Pei-yi on self-examination and confession, Paolo Santangelo on "sin" in Neo-Confucianism, Cynthia Brokaw on the so-called "ledgers of merit and demerit," Sakai Tadao on morality books, and, on the Buddhist side, by Chün-fang Yü on the late Ming Buddhist revival, and by Kuo Li-Ying on confession and remorse in early and medieval Chinese Buddhism.[1] Thanks
[104] to their efforts we can discern the contours of the Chinese indigenous landscape in which the Christian practices found their place.

In their contribution to this volume, Eugenio Menegon and Liam Brockey have highlighted the central role played by the sacrament of penance (*gaojie* 告解, "statement and release") in the religious life of early Chinese Christians.* There is, indeed, ample evidence indicating that, certainly during the formative period (roughly the second half of the seventeenth century), Chinese converts regarded the two related sacraments of baptism (which cancels both original sin and the sins already committed)

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* ["Deliver us from evil: confession and salvation in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Chinese Catholicism," by Eugenio Menegon, pp. 9–101, and "Illuminating the shades of sin: the Society of Jesus and confession in seventeenth-century China," by Liam Matthew Brockey, pp. 129–181—JAS.]

[1] Eberhard 1967; Santangelo 1991; Wu Pei-yi 1979, pp. 5–38; Brokaw 1991, Brokaw 1987, pp. 137–196; Sakai 1960; Yü 1981; Kuo 1994.

and of confession-and-absolution (which eliminates the consequences of sins committed afterwards) as the two most essential rituals of their faith. Baptism (*ling xi* 領洗) was of course all-decisive, for it marked the neophyte's entry into the religious community; yet it was a one-time *rite de passage* that could not be repeated, whereas confession was a recurring act of penitence and purification. The Fujian veteran convert Li Jiugong 李九功 (d. 1681) even describes it as a method of phased self-improvement: confession must be made as frequently as possible; first one confesses the most serious sins (which also may be confessed repeatedly, to strengthen the feeling of remorse), then the lighter ones, until finally the state of freedom of sin is reached: "That is the recipe for achieving saintliness."[2]

For Christian Confucian scholars like Li Jiugong the sequence of contemplations and observances culminating in the rite of sacramental confession served a double purpose: it not only was aimed at averting divine punishment, but also functioned as a method of moral self-improvement. The Catholic confession formed part of a larger complex, the initial stages of which indeed show some affinity with the Confucian ideal of moral self-investigation and self-cultivation (*xingxiu* 省修). The sequence starts with a careful self-scrutiny that leads to a clear awareness of one's transgressions and to the inner feeling of "bitter remorse" (*tonghui* 痛悔). The practice is accompanied by the daily observances that every Christian is supposed to perform. At dawn the practitioner meditates and asks for God's help to spend the day without committing any sins; at the end of the day he reviews all his acts of thought, speech, and body, whatever evil he may have done, and whatever good he may have failed to do. In the case of minor ("venial") sins he thinks about a way to amend them, and the more serious ones are stored in his memory, or are noted down in writing. At the end of each month or each fortnight all the major faults
[105] are inventoried. But all this memorizing and recording is useless if it is not accompanied by an intense feeling of guilt and repentance. Remorse can be inspired by fear, but it is better to follow the example of a filial son who simply cannot bear the thought of having neglected his parents, even if they do not reprimand him.[3]

However, unlike the Confucian discipline of self-cultivation, which ideally is an autonomous process of moral improvement undertaken for its own sake, in the Catholic practice the initial stages had to lead up

2 Li Jiugong, *Shensi lu* 慎思錄 (A Record of Meditations; notes by Li Jiugong posthumously edited by his son Li Yifen 李奕芬, ca. 1682), j. 1, ff. 9a–10a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 9, pp. 163–165).

3 For this sentence, see *Kouduo richao*, j. 3, ff. 22b–23a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 222–223).

to the strictly individual act of confession made to the priest, who alone is authorized to confer absolution, and to enjoin the performance of a penance (a "satisfaction," *shu* 贖), to redress the balance. In the whole sequence the act of *gaojie* constitutes the climax and the ritualised core. The sacramental rite of confession is essential; without it no serious sins can be forgiven. Since the believer always would run the chance of dying while burdened with mortal sin (leading to eternal damnation), confession should be made as frequently as possible, but only converts living in or near the few larger cities would be able to do so; the others had to wait for the rare occasions when a priest visited their communities. In the meantime, as Fan Zhong 范中 remarks in his *Shengjiao xiaoyin* 聖教小引 (*Brief Introduction to the Holy Doctrine*, 1633), one must practice "self-accusation" in front of the house altar, and firmly decide not to sin again; but only as a provisional measure, awaiting an opportunity to make real confession.[4]

The importance attached by Christian devotees to the rite of confession-and-absolution as the only effective way to escape from divine wrath and damnation is by no means surprising. If we concentrate on their writings (as distinguished from the prescriptive texts written or translated by missionaries, in which the emphasis is more on soteriological subjects like Incarnation, Passion, and Redemption), it appears that to them the core message of their faith was a doctrine of *divine retribution*. It was based on a strong and uncompromising monotheism: the belief in the one omnipotent and omniscient Lord of Heaven, the divine autocrat and judge who rewards and punishes all human souls in the hereafter. It was coupled with a very strong awareness of sin (not as a mere transgression, but as an act of rebellion against the Great Ruler, and of impiety towards the Great Father-and-Mother) and of the wages of sin: either temporary suffering in purgatory, or eternal damnation in hell. Since the judgment takes place after this life, there is a marked preoccupation with death and the hereafter. The burden of sin and its requital are purely individ-
[106] ual, for each human soul is a unique, separately created spiritual entity, endowed with rational thought and free will, and therefore fully responsible for the consequences of all deeds committed during its one and only earthly life. It is not amazing that in such a configuration the sacrament of confession-and-absolution has come to occupy such a special position. Here not much more will be said about the Catholic ritual, for which I may refer to Eugenio Menegon's contribution. The present paper mainly

4 Fan Zhong, *Shengjiao xiaoyin*, ff. 8b–9a.

is an attempt to analyse contemporary Buddhist and Buddho-Daoist penitential rites, especially the communal confessional liturgies called *chanhui* 懺悔, and to define the main points of similarity to, and difference with, the Catholic *gaojie*.

Buddhist chanhui *Rituals*

The theme of retribution naturally leads us to Buddhism. The universal law of *karman*, which holds that every conscious act of mind, speech, or body sooner or later is to be requited, and that the balance of those positive and negative effects determines the destiny of every sentient being, forms the very heart of the Buddhist doctrine. Since it is coupled with the belief in rebirth on the "six levels of existence" (i.e., rebirth as a god, a titan, a human being, an animal, a hungry ghost, or a denizen of hell), rebirth on one of the lower levels and the amount of suffering connected with it is held to be the result of the burden of negative *karman* (*zuiye* 罪業) inherited from past lives. Rebirth as a human being is considered "as difficult to attain as throwing a mustard seed through a needle's eye," and since that privileged status is constantly endangered by the accumulation of new negative *karman*, much merit (*gong* 功) is needed to avoid an unhappy rebirth.[5]

Since early times this complex of beliefs has given rise to elaborate rituals called *chanhui* ("confession of guilt and remorse").[6] Such penitential meetings had their roots in Indian Buddhism, but they underwent an extraordinary development in China, at least since the late fifth century CE. During the following centuries, and till late imperial times, there was a steady production of liturgical texts that allow us to trace the development
[107] of the ritual. *Chanhui* meetings still were regularly performed in mid-Qing times, and we have quite a number of Ming and Qing penitentials that can be used as a basis for comparison with Catholic confession.

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[5] This is of course an extremely simplified version of the doctrine of cause and effect; it does not do justice to the very complicated and sophisticated theories of causation elaborated in Buddhist scholastics, nor does it take into account the fundamental Mahāyāna critique of causation that considers the whole process as "empty," or illusory. However, this concrete picture of the act and its consequences and of a transmigration of individual "souls" no doubt would agree with the views of the vast majority of Buddhist lay believers—the kind of people we are concerned with here.

[6] *Chanhui* is a hybrid compound, the first syllable of which is a garbled transcription of the Sanskrit *kṣamā*, "expression of remorse," combined with *hui*, "repentance."

However, a word of caution is in place here. Such a comparison would be most appropriate if it could be taken for granted that the early missionaries recruited most, or at least a sizeable number, of their converts from a lay Buddhist milieu, and that we, therefore, could assume that Chinese Christians generally were familiar with such Buddhist rites. Strictly speaking we cannot do so, for from Chinese sources very little is known about the religious background of converts. In a few cases their religious affiliation is well-documented: Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1562–1627) and both his parents are known to have been Buddhist lay devotees, and Wang Zheng 王徵 (1571–1644) had been attracted by Buddhism and by Daoism before his conversion, but such information is quite exceptional.

On the other hand, we do have some circumstantial evidence. In the first place there is the testimony of the Jesuit annual reports (*Litterae Annuae* summarizing the state of the mission for the whole of China, and *Pontos*, the more detailed reports from individual mission houses). They largely consist of case stories about noteworthy conversions, especially those that could be made under difficult circumstances, after initial resistance. Here converts very often are said originally to have been followers of "the sect of idolaters" or admirers of some famous "bonze." Details are rarely given, but the case stories do suggest a great popularity of lay Buddhism among the lower fringe of the urban gentry, the Jesuits' favourite target group. And this is fully confirmed by a well-known phenomenon: the late Ming upsurge of lay Buddhism led by popular preachers like Zhuhong 袾宏 (1535–1615) and Zhixu 智旭 (1599–1655); there was a wave of temple building, and Buddhist associations flourished everywhere. The Buddhist revival found many of its followers in literati circles, and (to the dismay of both Confucian purists and Christian scholars) it was quite common for literati families to have Buddhist rites, including penitential services, performed as part of their funerary lore, for the benefit of deceased relatives. It, therefore, seems quite probable that most Christian converts from the lower layers of urban gentry had some experience with *chanhui* meetings.

The confession of sins or transgressions is very common in Chinese Buddhism. It forms part of many different rituals, such as the formulary of ordination of the lay Buddhist (the Triple Refuge, *san gui* 三歸, and the acceptance of the Five Vows, *wu jie* 五戒); the acceptance of the Bodhisattva Vows (*pusa jie* 菩薩戒); the daily services held in Pure Land Monasteries, and the most extensive Buddhist ritual, the Water-and-Land Plenary Mass (*shuilu dahui* 水陸大會), that is celebrated during seven days and nights
[108] for the liberation of all suffering souls. The occurrence of penitentials in

so many different liturgical contexts shows the importance attached to confession in Mahāyāna Buddhism and the redeeming or purifying power attributed to it. There can be no doubt that its origin must be sought in the purely monastic sphere of earliest Buddhism, *viz.* in the fortnightly *uposatha* meeting during which all the ca. 250 rules of the Vinaya code are recited one by one, and each monk who has violated a rule is expected to confess the offence. The confession is followed by a penance, which, depending on the gravity of the offence, may vary from permanent excommunication to a mere "notification." The *uposatha* meeting is considered a most essential element in monastic life, since it is believed to guarantee the moral purity of the *saṅgha*, the religious community.

Here we shall concentrate on Mahāyāna liturgical texts of Chinese origin exclusively dealing with non-monastic penitential meetings. In length the texts vary from brief, one-*juan* formularies to very elaborate (up to forty-two *juan* 卷) compilations. They belong to the genre called *chanfa* 懺法, "penitential methods," as also appears from their titles, that usually end in *-yi* 儀, "ceremonial," or *-guiyi* 規儀, "ceremonial rules." The earliest examples date from the late fifth century CE. For the early stages of the development we may refer to the studies by Kuo Li-Ying and Vande Walle;[7] in what follows we shall mainly make use of some *chanhui* texts compiled or edited in Ming and early Qing times.[8] As indicated by their titles, penitential *libretti* generally are associated with a certain scripture (e.g., *Zhunti sanmei xingfa* 準題三昧行法, "Method for the Practice of the Cuṇḍī Meditation," based on the Tantric T 1075–1077 *Cuṇḍīdevī–dhāraṇī*,
[109] "Spell of the Goddess Cuṇḍī") and/or with a certain saviour like the future Buddha Maitreya or the compassionate bodhisattva Dizang (Kṣitigarbha) who saves suffering souls from hell. During scripture-related penitential

[7] Kuo 1994; Vande Walle. 1975 / 1976.

[8] *Zoku* II suppl. 2.1: *De yu longhua xiuzheng chanfa* 得遇龍華修證懺法, a Maitreya penitential by the Tiantai monk Ruxing, colophon dated 1606; *Yi lengyan jiujing shichan* 依楞嚴究竟事懺, a penitential based on the (apocryphal) T 1945 *Shoulengyan jing* 首楞嚴經 ("*Śūraṃgama-sūtra*"), by the 16th century monk Chanxiu 禪修; *Cibei Dizang chanfa* 慈悲地藏懺法, a Kṣitigarbha penitential by Zhixu 智旭 (1599–1655); *Zhunti sanmei xingfa* 准提三昧行法, a penitential based in the Tantric T 1075–1077 *Cuṇḍīdevīdhāraṇī*, by Shoudeng 受登 (late Ming); *Cibei Yaoshi baochan* 慈悲藥師寶懺, a Bhaiṣajyaguru penitential, anonymous (Qing); *Zoku* II suppl. 2.3: *Cibei daochang shuichanfa suiwenlu* 慈悲道場水懺法隨聞錄, an annotated edition of the (Tang?) "Water penitential," by Zhizheng 智證 (Kangxi era). Some additional information has been derived from earlier texts: T 461 the (apocryphal) *Foming jing* 佛名經 or "Buddha-names Scripture", and T 1909 *Cibei daochang chanfa* 慈悲道場懺法 (10 *juan*, anonymous); the earliest nucleus of this large compilation probably dates from the sixth century, but the bulk of the text consists of later additions of Song and Yuan times.

rites a copy of the holy text was placed on the altar and worshipped, a practice that, as we shall see, was ridiculed by Yang Tingyun.

As in so many Buddhist rituals, two basic notions underlie *chanhui* services: "merit" (*gong* 功) and "transfer" (*huixiang* 迴向); they, indeed, may be called the twin pillars of lay Buddhism. Any positive act of mind, speech or body, including the performance of worship and penitence, is believed to generate merit that improves one's karmic situation, and that yields some beneficial results during the present life or afterwards; the benefits expected may vary from spiritual progress (the successive stages of the bodhisattva career, and ultimately the achievement of Buddhahood) to down-to-earth goals like long life, good health, material wealth and male offspring. The act of *huixiang*, "re-directing," is based on the fundamental Mahāyāna idea that the merit thus generated can be "transferred" to others in order to improve their karmic balance and to liberate their souls from suffering. The notion of *huixiang* is an essential element in *chanhui* rituals, and it also constitutes the channel through which these have become integrated into the ritual lore of family and lineage, for they generally are performed for the benefit of deceased parents.

Formally, however, the range of beneficiaries is much wider, in keeping with the Mahāyāna ideals of universal compassion and salvation. In *chanhui* liturgies the merit generated is transferred to all, in concentric circles: to all sentient beings on all the levels of existence (even including the gods, for as their status is not permanent they still belong to the world of suffering); to all human beings of different categories (headed by the emperor and his kin, the ministers, the magistrates and other authorities); to the patron's ancestors, parents and other relatives, and to the persons present at the ritual. The confession is not followed by any kind of absolution; there is no supernatural confirmation that the burden of sin actually has been eliminated, or reduced. Apparently the merit engendered by the positive act of confession (with the assistance of superhuman powers, as we shall see) is expected to do its work automatically, through the mechanism of *ganying* 感應, "stimulus-and-response," or, in Western terms, by the force of the sacral act as such, *ex opere operato.*

A *chanhui* ritual can be held in a Buddhist temple, or in the sponsor's home, if it has sufficient space. The cultic centre is the *daochang* 道場, the delimited sacred space with its altar. The latter is not the permanent main altar in the Buddha Hall of the temple, but a temporary structure arranged for the occasion, with images, banners, candles, incense, flowers, various
[110] food offerings, and sometimes also a copy of the scripture with which the penitential is associated.

There may be a band of monks playing on percussion instruments to accompany the chanted parts of the liturgy (hymns of praise in unrhymed verse), but the actual officiant is the *fashi* 法師, the Master of the Law, who must be a senior monk of excellent repute. He is assisted by the *zhuren* 主人, the lay patron, who normally is the leader of the sponsoring family or local association. The *fashi* is the sole celebrant: it is he who recites all the texts, including the confessional parts, on behalf of the congregation. In doing so he actually impersonates the lay participants, as appears from the fact that every confessional passage he recites opens with the words "I, so-and-so..." (*wo moujia* 我某甲) or "Your disciple so-and-so..." (*dizi moujia* 弟子某甲). As an acolyte the patron performs some simple acts like fumigation. The other lay participants only take part by kowtowing at certain moments, and by chanting some brief formulas in unison.

However, the *chanhui* meeting also is attended by many more actors of another order. At the beginning of the service, right after having consecrated the altar by fumigation, the priest "invites" (*qing* 請) large numbers of superhuman powers (Buddhas from all the directions of space, bodhisattvas and protective deities, individually and in groups) to "descend" (*jiang* 降) in order to hear the prayers and vows and to act as invisible "witnesses" (*zhengmeng* 證盟). They are attracted by the act of fumigation, for the priest has magically inflated the smoke rising from the incense to form a haze of cosmic proportions that pervades the whole universe. The beginning of every section in the liturgy is marked by the invocation and arrival of large groups of superhuman beings, whose names are enumerated in lengthy litanies. They always include Śākyamuni, the previous Buddhas of the present aeon, and the Buddha of the "Western Paradise" Amitābha, as well as great bodhisattvas like the future Buddha Maitreya, Avalokiteśvara (*Guanyin* 觀音), and Kṣitigarbha (*Dizang* 地藏), but the vast majority of invited powers just are names, largely borrowed from a special kind of scriptures called *Foming jing* 佛名經, "Buddha-names Scriptures," or "Litanies of All Buddhas." In their original form, which probably was derived from Indian or Central Asian prototypes, *Foming jing* merely consist of enormous lists of (mostly fictitious) names of Buddhas, each name being preceded by *Namo*... 南無, "Homage to...." At an early stage *chanhui* liturgies have become amalgamated with such devotional litanies, and the conflation has resulted in impressive rosters of saviours and protectors (and, in the more elaborate versions, also of holy scriptures, relics,

[111] and other sacred objects) that figure at the beginning of each section.[9] The evocation of Buddhas and bodhisattvas whose virtues are extolled in hymns and who are appealed to for help constitutes the devotional element in a *chanhui* liturgy. Their saving grace clearly was held indispensable for the elimination of sin. On the other hand, they are not expected to "deactivate" the process of *karman* as such, for doctrinally speaking that would be impossible: it is said that not even a Buddha can undo the law of cause and effect. Here again the principle is that of *huixiang*. In the course of their spiritual careers, during innumerable aeons, Buddhas and advanced bodhisattvas have accumulated immense "stores of merit," and they are paragons of compassion. Therefore, they can be implored to put some of it at the disposal of the suffering souls, to redress their karmic balance.

Chanhui liturgies never are exclusively devoted to sin, remorse, and confession; they also contain sections that open a brighter perspective. The confessional parts invariably are followed by a section called *suixi* 隨喜, "Compliant Joy," in which expression is given to the happy expectation that all beings, once liberated from delusion and sin, are bound to produce the thought of enlightenment, and that they, after having passed through ever higher stages of spiritual perfection, finally will reach Buddhahood.[10] In many penitentials this section is followed by a number of pious vows (*fa yuan* 發願) to the same effect. The *chanhui* ritual is therefore not only a statement of guilt and contrition, but also one of joy and hope.

The confessional sections follow a fixed pattern and are clearly structured. The many hundreds of sinful deeds or attitudes are categorized and sub-categorized. There are general categories such as offences committed against the Three Jewels (*san bao* 三寶: the Buddha, the Doctrine, and the *Saṁgha* or monastic community), or those born from heresy, or those associated with thought, speech, and body. There also are long lists of specific sins, like those associated with one of the sense organs, or with one of the ten evil attitudes (lust, covetousness, arrogance, anger, hypocrisy, deceit, enmity, wrong views, oppressiveness, and quarrelsomeness).

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[9] For the relation between the various original *Foming jing* (e.g., T 440, translated by Bodhiruci from an Indian original) and the conflated versions with penitential sections (e.g., the anonymous T 441, an enormous thirty-*juan* penitential litany of Chinese origin), see Kuo 1994, pp. 119–130, and Vande Walle 1975–1976, pp. 150–166. The idea of combining lists of evoked superhuman powers with confessional passages may well have been borrowed from Daoism.

[10] E.g., *Zoku* II suppl. 2.1: *Zhunti sanmei xingfa*, f. 46b; *Yi lengyan jiujing shichan*, j. 1, ff. 21a–b; *Cibei Yaoshi baochan*, j. 3, ff. 61b–62a; *Cibei Dizang chanfa*, j. 3, ff. 80b–81a.

Each confessional passage deals with misdeeds of a certain (sub)category. [112] In the more extensive liturgies the text is expanded by the insertion of lengthy quotations from sūtras; contemplative passages about the nature of sin; very detailed descriptions of infernal tortures, and hymns of praise and devotion.

One example of a standard confessional passage may suffice; it figures in a late-seventeenth-century annotated version of the "[Healing] Water Penitential of the Numinous Site of Compassion," compiled by the monk Zhizheng 智證.[11] It deals with sins belonging to the subcategory of arrogance and contempt. After having invoked yet another host of superhuman powers, the priest recites on behalf of the congregation:

> Again, from the beginningless past till the present day we, so-and-so, have committed acts of arrogance and abuse of power. When being members of prominent families we have scorned all other people; on account of our high status we have despised the lowly; in our drunken frenzy we have been behaving like fools all day, sparing neither kin nor strangers, and losing sight of the distinctions between noble and base. . . .

And so on; there follows a long list of sinful deeds relating to arrogance, abuse of power, and dissolute behaviour, such as various ways of disregarding food prohibitions; using one's wealth to bribe others, or to loan money at exorbitant interest rates; maltreating male and female slaves; using one's power to burn forests and orchards and to block roads and waterways; and wasting time in gambling and chess-playing, while neglecting one's religious duties. Then the text goes on:

> Today we sincerely confess all these sinful deeds, whether light or grave, whether light or weighty, whether coarse or subtle, irrespective of whether we have committed them personally, or have encouraged others to do so, or have praised others for doing so. . . .

And, finally:

> Today, having cleansed our hearts, we earnestly pray to the Buddhas of all the directions of space and to the bodhisattvas of the great earth, kowtowing and beating our foreheads. We ask them to pity us as we are confessing, that they may bring about total elimination of the requital of these sins.

Such a passage, chosen at random from countless examples, clearly shows the two most essential points of difference between Buddhist *chanhui* and Catholic confession. In the first place, the sins confessed in the Buddhist

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[11] *Zoku* II suppl. 2.3: *Cibei daochang shuichanfa suiwenlu*, j. 3, ff. 195a–199b.

ritual always are generic and generalized, and never relate to one-time specific misdeeds. Confession is made of all possible *types* of sins committed "from the beginningless past." That expression must be taken literally, for unlike the Judaeo-Christian belief in a one-time creation of all things [113] *ex nihilo*, Buddhist cosmology does not recognize any absolute beginning of the cycle of rebirth. A world-system passes through an endless alternation of *kalpas* (cosmic aeons of unimaginable length) of integration and disintegration, and phenomenal existence stretches back into an interminable past. In a Buddhist perspective it therefore would make no sense to confess the few specific misdeeds which the penitent can remember, for the karmic burden has been accumulated in the course of innumerable aeons. Ordinary human beings have no remembrance of their former lives, and the misdeeds committed during the present life anyhow would be dwarfed by the burden of sin inherited from the past.

Secondly: even though confession is made on behalf of each individual sinner, the *chanhui* liturgy is a collective ceremonial sponsored by a familial or communal group; the merit produced is shared by all the participants (and their deceased relatives), and as a joint undertaking it furthers the social cohesion within the organizing body. In that respect it basically differs from the strictly personal Christian act of confession. If anything, the Catholic Mass ritual, which is celebrated by the priest on behalf of the congregation, and which also includes a general confession of sins (the *Confiteor*), shows more affinity to *chanhui*.

Two more remarks about Buddhist confession. The first one concerns motivation. As we shall see, Christian criticism of the Buddhist penitential is, among other things, directed against the supposed lack of emotional involvement on the side of the participants: they do not feel any genuine remorse and merely follow the rules of a "stale ritual." The criticism also concerns the lack of spiritual depth: *chanhui* rituals just are intended to secure good luck and material prosperity for the participants and their kin. In general this may have been true; in most cases the performance of the ritual may have been routinized, and the motivation superficial. However, that is not the whole story. Going through *chanhui* texts we occasionally come across passages that suggest a deeper religious motivation. Thus, in an early penitential of the "Buddha-names Litany" type we find an enumeration of seven motivations for confession, apparently arranged in ascending order of appreciation.[12] They may be summarized as follows:

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[12] T 441 *Foming jing*, j. 1, ff. 188b–c.

> First, *shame*: I must realize that long ago, at the start of his spiritual career as a bodhisattva, the Buddha has been an ordinary fellow (*fanfu* 凡夫), just like me. Look what he has accomplished, and how little I have achieved—I still am a *fanfu.* That is a reason for deep shame and remorse.
>
> Second, *fear*. I must tremble at the thought of the consequences of my
> [114] sins, the mass of suffering that awaits me in future lives.
>
> Third, *disgust*. I must look upon this body of mine as a source of pain and pollution; in all respects it is impure and disgusting. All bodily existence is loathsome, and I must strive to be liberated from it.
>
> Fourth, *intent*. Once delivered from the burden of sin I may hope to give rise to the Intention Aimed at Enlightenment (*puti xin* 菩提心), striving for the pure transcendent Buddha-body, while advancing along the path of the bodhisattva.
>
> Fifth, *equanimity*. I may hope to develop the universal compassion that is free from any thought of "I" and "the other." As long as I make any distinction between enemies and loved ones my mind still is fettered by discriminating thought, which is a source of attachment, sin, and suffering.
>
> Sixth, *gratitude.* I must consider how during innumerable lives as a bodhisattva the future Buddha has toiled and suffered, sacrificing his body, parting with his wife and children, and abandoning all he had, and how he did that for my sake. Such a grace is hard to requite. I must do my utmost to dedicate myself to the Three Jewels and to save all beings.
>
> Seventh, *emptiness*. Finally I may expect to realize the illusory nature of sin, its arising and its elimination, for these still belong to the world of causation. On the highest level of truth they have no substantiality (*wuyou shixiang* 無有實相).

Of course the text is normative and prescriptive; we cannot make out to what extent penitents really were moved by such lofty considerations. But even on the normative level the passage is interesting, for in spite of the totally different doctrinal orientation (each of the seven motivations is firmly grounded in the belief in rebirth and karmic retribution, both anathema to Christian believers), some of the themes show a remarkable affinity to the motivations that are presented in Christian texts as reasons for repentance: feelings of shame and fear; the disgust of the body as a source of sin and temptation, and, most strikingly, the grateful acknowledgment of the saviour's "vicarious suffering" and grace.

On the other hand, the seventh and most profound motivation—the realization of the illusoriness of sin itself—may sound strange in a Christian perspective, for the very practice of confession seems to presuppose the reality of sin and requital. In the Buddhist perspective the meaning is quite clear. The practitioner imagines himself to have reached the stage of an advanced bodhisattva who has realized *prajñā*, the liberating insight into the illusoriness of all distinctions, that renders him immune to all

defilements. On that level, he realizes that all concepts are mere mental constructs produced by the deluded mind, and that both sin and deliverance (and, indeed, Enlightenment and Buddhahood) are "empty," i.e., without substantiality. Once that insight has been gained, the very notion
[115] of sin will evaporate, "like a snowflake falling on hot iron." However, that does not imply that sin and its consequences are non-existent—they have the provisional, non-substantial reality of a nightmare or a magic apparition. They are operative on the level of conventional truth, in the world of sensory experience. In Mahāyāna scholastics with its fundamental paradigm of "levels of truth" this type of reasoning is quite common: notions that on one level are accepted as real are transcended on the next one.[13]

We can understand why from a Christian point of view the Buddhist doctrine of transcendence was unacceptable. When a provincial graduate with Buddhist inclinations tells Giulio Aleni (1582–1649) that true mental illumination (*mingxin* 明心) renders the Ten Commandments and the Seven Conquering Virtues superfluous, he is taken to task by the missionary: the Buddhist notion of absolute truth (*diyi yi* 第一義) is a very serious fallacy, because it leads to a dangerous kind of moral indifferentism; it is incompatible with the practice of self-cultivation that Christianity shares with Confucianism.[14]

The second remark about *chanhui* liturgies concerns language, style, and terminology. When reading Ming and early Qing penitentials one is struck by the level of literary sophistication; they clearly have been produced by highly educated monks, well-versed both in literary Chinese and in Buddhist scholastics. The language is ornate, terse, and prosodic, with all the trappings of *wenyan* rhetoric. In addition, the texts are teeming with terms borrowed from the highly technical vocabulary of Buddhist philosophy. If we keep in mind that the texts were orally recited by the officiating priest, the conclusion seems warranted that the listening lay participants only can have caught the general drift of the narrative. Only a few participants who were exceptionally well-versed in Buddhist

[13] Already in early penitentials a distinction is made (using Huayan scholastic terminology) between *shichan* 事懺, "factual" or "phenomenal" penitence and *lichan* 理懺, "noumenal" penitence. *Shichan* corresponds to the conventional confession of sins, *lichan* to the higher form of liberation from sin in the light of ultimate truth.

[14] *Kouduo richao*, a collection of recorded conversations between Aleni (and some other Jesuits) and Fujian literati, held in the years 1630–1640, j. 7, ff. 22a–b: conversation held with the *juren* Zhou Minglu in Yongchun on 10 June, 1637.

doctrinal discourse would have been able to understand the recitative in more detail. Of course this is not surprising—the liturgical performance is more important than the literal meaning of the text, and many rituals are meant to be unintelligible (in fact, in some penitentials liberal use is made of Sanskrit *mantras*).

However, even a very general understanding of the penitential passages may have been quite effective. In any case, the endless enumeration of sins and suffering must have strengthened the feeling that the world of
[116] man is a vale of tears—again an interesting parallel with the Christian *contemptus mundi*.[15] But perhaps it is not too far-fetched to suppose that it also had a cathartic effect upon the audience: the recitative lent a voice to their fears and frustrations. Take, for example, the very elaborate lamentation about the evils of this world that figures in another section of a late Ming penitential.[16] It is an appalling panorama of misgovernment, corruption, violence, and agony. The rulers are so fond of killing that all their officials are trembling with fear; even persons of high standing may be killed for any reason: "on account of their criticism, or of their talent, or of a poem or essay: they may be killed for not shunning taboo characters, or for being too powerful or too famous: or because of slander, or of jealousy, or just by mistake." Murder and conspiracy are rampant at the court; princes and powerful ministers manipulate the ruler, and the fall of the dynasty always is followed by devastating rebellions and warfare. Corruption is everywhere: official appointments and titles are for sale; rapacious officials enrich themselves at the cost of the people. Oppressive taxes are collected with brutal force, and some people are obliged to sell themselves as slaves. There is a lengthy description of the horrors of war and the suffering of the soldiers, and of the desperate situation of the inhabitants of cities under siege: when there is no more grain the people try to keep alive, first on grass and tree-bark, then on leather and straw—and finally on human flesh. Women and children are kidnapped and butchered to serve as food; in gruesome detail the text describes how human flesh is sold on the market, under veiled names like "two-legged sheep" (*liangjiao yang* 兩腳羊) and "mixed bone hash" (*hegu lan* 合骨爛). The litany goes on: there are the homeless tramps, the law-breakers tortured and banished,

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[15] Cf. Matteo Ricci's eloquent description of the woes of this world in *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義, j. 1, third section (*TXCH*, vol. 1, pp. 421–426, trans. by D. Lancashire and Hu Kuo-chen, Matteo Ricci 1985, pp. 133–141; closely resembling section 2 of Ricci's *Jiren shipian* 畸人十篇 ("Ten Essays by a Solitary Man"), in *TXCH*, vol. 1, pp. 125–129.

[16] *Zoku* II suppl. 2.1: *Yi lengyan jiujing shichan*, j. 1, ff. 9b–10b.

women suffering in childbirth, the pains of castration, and many forms of suicide, as well as the misery resulting from natural disasters. Every item is worded according to a standard formula, endlessly repeated: *chan chu* ... [*zhi*] *ku* 懺除 ... [之] 苦, "May [this] penance serve to eliminate the sorrow of...." The whole section reads like a magic incantation.

[117] *Christian Critique: Yang Tingyun on* chanhui

In view of the missionaries' and their converts' extremely negative attitude towards Buddhism, it is not surprising that its rituals are considered superstitious and harmful. The Buddhist *chanhui* are simply dismissed by Aleni as "a web of lies" (*kuangwang* 誆網), because they are based on the false doctrine of rebirth.[17] But we also have a more detailed criticism of Buddhist confession by a prominent and well-informed Christian scholar, Yang Tingyun. At the time of the Nanjing persecution and its aftermath (1616–1622), Yang was under attack in his native Hangzhou because of the protection he gave to the missionaries, and in those years he wrote several apologetic treatises to defend Christianity and to define its position *vis-à-vis* Confucianism, Buddhism, and sectarian beliefs. In one of these, entitled *Tian shi mingbian* 天釋明辨 (*The Clear Distinction between* [*the Doctrine of*] *Heaven and Buddhism*), Yang discusses no less than thirty points of "apparent similarity but actual difference" between the two religions (and, not surprisingly, on each point tries to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity).[18] Some of his arguments also are found in another treatise by Yang, his *Daiyi pian* 代疑篇 (*Instead of Doubting*) of 1621.[19]

Yang's first objection concerns the aspect of routinism, the mechanical performance of the ritual. The participants are not really involved in it, for they are not moved by genuine personal remorse. They just let the priest recite standard texts and transfer the merit to generate good luck; thus, they add the sin of greed to that of indifference. How can one be saved by a mere text? Our most profound scripture is the *Book of Changes*—but how ridiculous would it be to place a copy of the *Yijing* on an altar, to worship it with flowers and incense, and to kowtow at every recited syllable!

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17 *Kouduo richao*, j. 7, ff. 22b–23a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 500–501).
18 Yang Tingyun, *Tian Shi mingbian*, *WXXB*, vol. 1, pp. 231–417; his critique of Buddhist confession is found on ff. 82a–b (*WXXB*, vol. 1, pp. 403–404).
19 Yang Tingyun, *Daiyi pian*, j. 2, ff. 19a–b (*WXXB*, vol. 2, pp. 619–620).

Yet that is what *chanhui* adepts are doing—not only ignorant men and women, but also accomplished literati.

Second argument: confession only can be effective if the sinner personally addresses the Lord of Heaven. In order to be cured the patient himself has to take the medicine: "you yourself have sinned, you yourself must change" (*zui ziji zuo, xu ziji geng* 罪自己作，須自己更). If you have offended the ruler, only he can forgive you, and sin is an offence committed against
[118] the supreme ruler of the universe.

Third argument: in the Buddhist liturgy no specific sins are confessed; it just follows "the rules of a stale ceremonial." The participants are kneeling down and kowtowing all day, but in the end, after the performance is over, they actually "still do not know for what concrete facts (*shi* 事) they have been doing penance."

Yang's fourth argument concerns the unique status and authority of the priest compared to Buddhist monk, who has nothing in common with the tricky Buddhist monk. He represents the orthodox line of transmission, for each individual priest has been ordained by a bishop, who in turn has been appointed by the pope; and the pope is the last in line of an apostolic succession that reaches back to Jesus himself.[20] Jesus personally has established the rite of confession, and due to that supernatural authority every single *sacerdote* has the power to confer absolution.

Yang Tingyun's critique of the Buddhist *chanhui* ritual as it actually was practised is very valuable, because before his conversion he had been active as the leader of a Buddhist lay association; his statements are no doubt based on first-hand experience.

The Bodhisattva Vows

A more individualized form of Buddhist confession is found in the ritual of the formal acceptance of the bodhisattva vows (*shou pusa jie* 受菩薩戒) that has been widely practiced since early medieval times; and that still is a standard element of Chinese Buddhist life. The formulary consists of forty-eight rules or prohibitions, the acceptance of which constitutes a kind of Mahāyāna ordination. Its scriptural basis is a fifth century Chinese

[20] It is curious that Yang does not mention the similar concept of "orthodox transmission" that existed in Chinese monastic Buddhism.

apocryphal scripture, the "*Sūtra* of the Brahmā Net" (T 1484 *Fanwang jing* 梵王經, wrongly attributed to Kumārajīva).[21]

The ordination takes place in the presence of three senior monks in front of an altar, but the actual admission to the bodhisattva career is not granted by them, but by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who have been invited invisibly to attend the ceremony. The vows can be taken collectively or individually. In the latter case, and especially if no qualified masters can be found, the ritual is a private affair enacted between the ordinand and the unseen powers. Since the candidate has to be morally pure, he or she has to practise penance and confession regarding all the forty-eight sins listed in the formulary, with utter sincerity and devotion, six times each day-and-night, before the images of Buddhas and bodhisatt-
[119] vas. If absolution, in the sense of a guaranteed remission of sins, is granted by the divine powers, it takes the form of a supernatural "sign" (*xiang* 相) that is revealed to the practitioner in a vision or a dream, the content of which may vary from very specific (e.g., a Buddha blessing the practitioner by touching his or her head) to very general (such as perceiving a strange smell, or seeing auspicious flowers). If after a full year of repentance and confession no sign has appeared, it means that the candidate's karmic burden is too heavy, and that the ordination has to be postponed till the next life.

To some extent the penitential part of this Buddhist rite resembles the Catholic sacrament: the act of penance has become individualized, and the ordinand seeks some kind of absolution. On the other hand, the content of the confession still is generalized. The candidate seeks redemption from categories of misdeeds ever committed in the course of innumerable lives, promises not to commit them again, and asks for forgiveness. No single specific misdeeds are mentioned.

Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: gongguo ge

Finally, we may briefly pay attention to another widespread practice (of Daoist origin, but in late imperial times existing in various syncretistic forms): the custom of keeping a daily account of one's positive and negative deeds in a so-called *gongguo ge* 功過格, or "Ledger of Merit and Demerit." It has become very popular in late Ming times among literati

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21 de Groot 1893; Kuo 1994, p. 56 sq.

with Buddhist inclinations; in fact, it was much propagated by the Buddhist preacher Zhuhong, who himself had composed an extensive *gongguo ge* entitled *Zizhi lu* 自知錄, "A Record of Self-knowledge," to be used by his lay followers.[22]

The notions of (de)merit as a quantifiable entity and of one's karmic situation as a kind of balance-sheet have found here their most concrete expression. In a *gongguo ge*, a great number (sometimes several hundreds) of good and evil acts are listed and categorized, along with the positive or negative value of each act, expressed in numbers of "merit" and "demerit" points. By daily filling out the formulary the practitioner can keep track of his or her karmic situation.

The relevance of this kind of moral bookkeeping for our subject is twofold. Firstly, here the process is fully individualized: the practitioner uses the register as a means to keep track of the karmic situation, and thereby to some extent to control the course of destiny. Secondly, the marks to be made in the *gongguo ge* refer to specific acts noted down shortly after
[120] their occurrence, and this somewhat resembles the Chinese Christian practice (of western origin) of keeping daily and monthly records of one's more serious misdeeds, using as a guideline the long list of categorized sins in the confessional manual (cf. below).

However, in the present context the *gongguo ge* practice constitutes a border case. It does have some religious content, for a number of sinful deeds listed are of a religious nature, and there always is the underlying belief in some kind of divine retribution. On the other hand, it is not accompanied by any form of confession, and it is not ritualised except in the last stage, when a Buddhist priest is needed to "activate" the surplus of merit collected.[23]

Buddhist and Christian Rites: Similarities and Contrasts

How does all this relate to Christian rituals? There surely are points of resemblance. To lay Buddhist observers these rituals no doubt seemed outlandish (and in some respects, like the priest touching women in baptism, objectionable), but they were not so far removed from Chinese

[22] For the *gongguo ge* in general, see Brokaw 1991; Brokaw 1987, pp. 137–196. For Zhuhong's *Record*, see Yü 1981, especially pp. 101–137, and the full translation of the formulary on pp. 233–259.

[23] Brokaw 1987, pp. 156 sqq.

practice as to be quite unintelligible. In the Catholic Mass sacrifice Buddhist observers could recognize a number of elements like the sacred space with its altar and icons; the purification of the altar by fumigation; the "descent" of the divine power believed to be invisibly present; the use of an incomprehensible cultic language, and the belief that attending the ritual was a source of *gong*, "merit." And there was, above all, the central role played by the priest as the [*saze'er*] *duode* [撒澤爾] 鐸德 (*sacerdote*), the indispensable celebrant and mediator, whose sacral status is demonstrated by his celibatarian purity, his expert knowledge of liturgical texts and gestures, and his ritual vestments. Like his Buddhist and Daoist rivals, the Catholic priest often acted as a faith healer and exorcist, using potent spells and talismans. His sacerdotal status was legitimised by a kind of spiritual lineage", for his ordination connected him with Jesus himself, *via* bishop, pope, and apostolic succession—a remarkable parallel to the Buddhist belief that each regularly ordained monk, through a filiation of masters and patriarchs, is connected with the elder disciple Kāśyapa (who has been called "the Saint Peter of Buddhism"!) and hence with the Buddha himself.

However, in the case of the sacrament of confession the differences predominate. In the first place, the role played by the Catholic priest in the rite of confession does not appear to have any counterpart in traditional Chinese religion. In the Buddhist rites the priest acts as a messenger reciting the confessional formulas and transferring the merit to other
[121] beings (as in *chanhui* rituals), or as a witness (present at the taking of the bodhisattva vows), but there is no question of his having the supernatural and exclusive authority to remit sins. The uniqueness of the Catholic sacrament is stressed by Giulio Aleni: although other doctrines may "exhort people by good words," only our religion knows absolution, and only Christians can receive it.[24]

Secondly, unlike Buddhist rites of confession the Christian one was strictly personal and individual, as were the stages that preceded and followed it: critical investigation of one's own conduct, repentance of transgressions committed by the individual penitent, and personal expiation through "works of satisfaction." The ritual itself consists of a face-to-face dialogue with the priest, the penitent confessing specific sinful acts and attitudes, and the confessor reacting to it, e.g., by asking about details as to time, place, circumstances, frequency, and people involved. In fact, some

[24] Aleni, *Dizui zhenggui*, j. 3, f. 8a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, p. 491).

Christians appear to have felt uneasy about the *gaojie* rite as being unnecessarily indiscreet and humiliating. In his tract *Tianzhu qinli lingxi gaojie er yao gui zhi li* 天主親立領洗告解二要規之理 (*Essentials of Baptism and Confession as Instituted by the Lord of Heaven Himself*), the Christian scholar and catechist Zhang Geng 張賡 (ca. 1570–1646/1647) mentions some of their arguments: “It is disgraceful and shameless to confess your own sins!”; “It is disgraceful that confession must be so direct and complete!,” and “The priest is our brother; why must he sit so majestically in front of the Lord[’s image] and listen to our confession, while we are kneeling down—is that not arrogance?”[25] Elsewhere Aleni, answering some questions that evidently had been provoked by feelings of shame, has to disappoint his interlocutor: no, sinful deeds have to be confessed one by one, without a single omission; no, confession has to be oral, and cannot be made in writing, as long as the penitent is able to speak.[26] In a section significantly named “Be Ashamed of Sinning, not of Confessing,” he tells a story illustrating that it is the devil himself who inspires such feelings of shame in order to prevent the sinner from being saved.[27]

[122] *The Classification of Sins:*
Gongguo ge *and Christian Confessional Manual*

It is not surprising that Christian spokesmen reject the traditional practices of *chanhui* and *gongguo ge*. Giulio Aleni denies the value of keeping a “ledger of merit and demerit” because remorse only can be effective if directed towards the only one who can forgive our sins—the Lord of Heaven;[28] and his disciple Li Jiugong criticizes the system because in the Ledgers both merits and demerits are listed: Christians only will note down their transgressions, for listing one’s good deeds is an act of pride, the first one of the seven capital sins.[29]

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[25] Zhang Geng, *Tianzhu qinli lingxi gaojie er yao gui zhi li*, ff. 2b–4a. In his reply to the latter question Zhang Geng draws an interesting parallel (borrowed from *Mencius*): during confession, the priest’s status is like that of the *shi*, i.e., the boy-medium who in the ancient ancestral ritual impersonated the soul of the dead; he was a mere boy, but because of his sacral status even elder relatives would kneel down and honour him.

[26] Aleni, *Dizui zhenggui*, j. 3, ff. 8b–9a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, pp. 492–493); j. 3, ff. 10a–b (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, pp. 495–496).

[27] Aleni, *Dizui zhenggui lüe* 滌罪正規略, ff. 34b–35b (*WXXB*, vol. 3, pp. 1264–1266).

[28] *Kouduo richao*, j. 4, ff. 12a–b (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 277–278) (Zhangzhou, 23 April 1633; conversation with a member of a Daoist association).

[29] Li Jiugong, *Shensi lu*, j. 3, f. 11a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 9, p. 223).

In one respect, however, the *gongguo ge* system does bear some resemblance to the Christian confessional manual: in both cases a great number of acts (in the Christian case only the negative ones) are formulated, categorized, and listed methodically. An extensive survey of sinful acts (201 items, more than what is found in any *gongguo ge*) is included in Aleni's *Dizui zhenggui* 滌罪正規 (Correct Rules for the Elimination of Sins, 1627), arranged according to the Ten Commandments and the Seven Capital Sins. In the introductory section Aleni explains how this part of the book must be used. Since it is essential that the penitent be aware of any sinful act he may have committed, including the circumstances and the persons involved, the list is presented as an aid "carefully to be consulted item by item." Minor transgressions also are listed, for "the mirror only is wiped clean if even the smallest specks of dust are removed."[30]

It also is significant that Aleni has published a more concise version of the text in one *juan*, that contains the list of categorized sins, with only a few additional paragraphs. This *Dizui zhenggui lüe* 滌罪正規略 (*Summary of the Correct Rules for the Elimination of Sins*) probably was intended to be diffused on a wider scale than the original four-*juan* version, as a simple guide for confession.[31] In its general arrangement and classification of sins Aleni's confessional manual follows the European model. However, since
[123] it had to be used by Chinese converts, its content has been thoroughly adapted to the Chinese environment. Especially in the sections dealing with religious activities and mantic techniques and with social relations (notably the prohibition of concubinage) the adaptation is obvious. Of course the text is normative and prescriptive, but as a "typology of sin" it is indicative of the formal value system that was current among Chinese devotees. In what follows special attention will be paid to two categories of offences: cases of superstitious behaviour, and sins related to family life and other hierarchical social relations.

As regards sins of superstition, the message is loud and clear. True to the principles of the monopolistic Mediterranean type of religion the Jesuits propagated, virtually all beliefs and practices of Chinese religious life were declared anathema and presented as devil's work. Certain Confucian

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30 Aleni, *Dizui zhenggui*, j. 1, f. 9b (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 4, p. 374).

31 For this *Summary*, see the article by Eugenio Menegon in this volume [v. note * above]. The text is included in the collection *Tongku jingji* (*Scriptural Texts Relating to Rigorous Observance*), compiled by João Fróis (1591–1638), reproduced in *WXSB*, vol. 3, pp. 1195–1272. I have not been able to consult another compendium entitled *Huizui yaozhi* 悔罪要指 (*The Essential Meaning of Repentance*). In *HCC*, p. 624, it is said to be by Lazzaro Cattaneo (1560–1640), "edited by Aleni in the 1630s."

rituals were deemed acceptable, but only in a "purified" form, stripped of all superstitious elements. By doing so the Jesuits and Christian scholars naturally sided with the most orthodox and purist wing of Confucianism. Since medieval times there had been concerned Confucian scholars fulminating against Buddhist superstition and Daoist magic; some Neo-Confucians rejected "vulgar" practices like geomancy and the burning of counterfeit paper money, and excluded Buddhist priests from their funerary rituals. On the other hand, even purists generally accepted the existence of such practices as belonging to the way of life of the unenlightened masses, and they did not want to eradicate them. Moreover, since in the Confucian tradition the personification of evil is unknown, they never would regard them as inspired by any Prince of Darkness.

But that vision was very much alive among Christians. Both the Jesuits and their converts were convinced that the forces of evil preferably used false doctrines, magic arts, and supernatural manifestations as means to delude mankind. In his *Shen gui zhengji* 神鬼正記 (*Correct Description of Angels and Devils*, ca. 1630) Alfonso Vagnone (Gao Yizhi 高一志, 1568–1640) presents an interesting list of satanic supernatural phenomena, such as voices heard in the air, automatic script, images coming to life and uttering prophesies, and telekinesis. Possession by a demon can manifest itself by glossolalia (an uneducated person suddenly being able to speak foreign languages and to quote difficult texts), clairvoyance, thought-reading, and enormous physical force.[32] Forswearing pagan beliefs and rituals was a prerequisite for becoming a Christian. The act was ritualised: before baptism the neophyte had to forsake all his former superstitions, to remove
[124] and destroy (by burning or burying) all the idols he possessed, and to burn all his non-Christian religious texts and talismans.[33] The ostentatious break with the past could not escape public attention, for it also meant that converts removed the protective images ("door gods") that had decorated the entrance to their homes and replaced them by the emblem of Christ.

In Christian sources much attention is paid to the description and condemnation of popular religious beliefs and customs. More than thirty of these are listed by Inácio da Costa (Guo Najue 郭納爵, 1603–1666) in

[32] *Shen gui zhengji*, ff. 3–4. Cf. also *Kouduo richao*, j. 1, f. 18b and j. 2, f. 31a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 71 and 158): all pagan rituals are inspired by the devil.

[33] Fan Zhong, *Shengjiao xiaoyin*, f. 7a; cf. also *Kouduo richao*, j. 6, ff. 1b–2a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 388–389: before baptism Christians are held to remove all idols from the altar in their house chapels (*jiatang* 家堂).

his *Zhu sumi pian* 燭俗迷篇 (*Elucidating Vulgar Superstitions*, ca. 1642). In Aleni's confessional manual in *Dizui zhenggui lüe* the emphasis naturally is on their prohibition: they are listed as "sinful" (*you zui* 有罪) under the First Commandment, i.e., as acts of rebellion against God himself.[34] They comprise three categories of offences:

> Firstly, all mantic techniques such as fortune-telling by drawing divination lots or by using the planchette; geomancy, chronomancy (the selection of lucky days), physiognomy, and astrology are qualified as sinful.
>
> Secondly, also sinful is any kind of involvement with Buddhism or Daoism. It is a long list that includes visiting temples and reciting scriptures and mantras; making vows; holding *jiao* 醮 rituals; contributing money to the restoration or decoration of temples and to the making of idols; copying or possessing pagan scriptures; not destroying one's pagan texts before baptism but selling them or giving them away, and any personal "contaminating" contact with Buddhist monks, Daoist priests or magicians.
>
> Thirdly, it is a sin to believe in pagan faith healing and prophetic dreams; to ascribe supernatural powers to herbs, trees, and animals; to write Daoist charms; to pronounce spells, and to join brotherhoods sealed with blood.

We never shall know to what extent these prohibitions were heeded by the mass of believers; the very fact that they are listed suggests that at least some Christians engaged in such ungodly activities. But in any case we may conclude that really conscientious believers were obliged virtually to renounce the whole body of commonly practised religious lore, and by doing so could not but marginalize themselves as a group. In their fundamentalist rejection of all traditional religious and mantic practice they even surpassed the most "purist" Confucian literati.

[125] As regards sins relating to social life, the contrast with traditional Chinese values is much less outspoken. Many sins pertaining to family life and other hierarchical relations are appended to the Fourth and the Sixth Commandments ("Honour thy father and thy mother" and "Thou shalt not commit adultery"). The Commandments are used as headings covering a number of analogous offences, as also was done in western confessional manuals. Thus, sinful conduct listed under the Fourth Commandment is not restricted to the relation between children and parents, but is extended to cover relations between other juniors and seniors within and outside the family: teacher and pupils, master and servants, and husband and wife. Only a few of these sins are explicitly related to Christianity,

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[34] The list has been translated in full by Eugenio Menegon in the present volume (pp. 96–97) [v. note * above].

notably committing sacrilegious acts in serving one's parents and failing to provide religious instruction to one's relatives. Apart from these, the list reads like a survey of traditional Confucian morality expressed in prohibitions. That is not amazing, for both the Jesuits and their educated converts always have claimed that their doctrine fully conformed to orthodox (*zheng* 正) Confucian moral principles and, indeed, could contribute to their realization. The most grievous sin in this category is lack of filial piety. Inferiors are sinning by not submitting to their superiors; pupils by disobeying their teachers; subjects by trespassing the laws of the authorities (*guanfu* 官府), and wives by not serving their husbands. On the other hand, the master of the house commits a sin if he maltreats his slaves and servants, and the husband if he does not provide his wife with her daily necessities. As Aleni has explained elsewhere: social inequality is natural and intended by God—and if there were no poor, how would the rich be able to gain merit by performing works of charity?[35]

The only important exception is the absolute prohibition of polygamy, i.e., taking a concubine. In the list of sins, concubinage ranks higher than sodomy, enjoying pornography, and visiting prostitutes. It is to be condemned even if no son is born from regular marriage. On this point no compromise was possible; cases are known of very distinguished prospective converts being refused baptism until they had sent away their concubine, and if after baptism a member of the congregation yielded to social pressure and took a concubine he risked being excommunicated.[36] The
[126] prohibition of concubinage was a Christian innovation that raised serious problems and controversies. To many outsiders it seemed to confirm the immoral nature of that religion, because it violated the Confucian rule that a filial son must use any means to secure male offspring.

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35 *Kouduo richao*, j. 1, f. 18b (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 77–78); j. 2, f. 31a (*CCT ARSI*, vol. 7, pp. 261–264).

36 A well-documented case is that of Wang Zheng, the well-known technologist and "pillar of the faith" in Xi'an, who for some time was excommunicated because at an advanced age he had taken a concubine, under heavy family pressure. He was admitted only after having sent her away and having forwarded a written statement of remorse—a curious document that has survived. It is appended to the collection of edifying tales presented orally by Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592–1666) and noted down by Wang, entitled *Chongyi tang riji suibi* 崇一堂日記隨筆 (*Daily Record of Miscellanea Made at the Chongyi Church*), Xi'an, 1638, in *WXSB*, vol. 2, pp. 833–837.

Christian Confession:
"Complementing Confucianism and Replacing Buddhism"

Finally, how about sin and confession in the Neo-Confucian tradition? The question is most relevant, for there can be no doubt that educated Christian converts—not only standard bearers like Xu Guangqi and Yang Tingyun, but also the almost anonymous, humble *xiucai* and schoolteachers who constituted the vast majority of converted literati—would regard themselves as *ru* 儒, Confucian scholars. The Confucian-Christian synthesis had been the result of mutual attraction. On the Jesuit side, ever since Ricci had singled out the class of "philosophers" as the most respectable and promising target group of the China mission, no effort was spared to demonstrate the compatibility of "original" Confucianism and Christianity. On the Chinese side, a tiny minority among the educated elite was attracted by the foreign doctrine because, according to a well-known expression coined by Xu Guangqi, it enriched Chinese culture by *bu ru yi fo* 補儒易佛, "complementing Confucianism and taking the place of Buddhism." On both scores, the Catholic sacrament of confession clearly illustrates the meaning of that motto.

In the Confucian tradition a crucial role has always been played by individual critical self-examination aimed at moral improvement. In Song Neo-Confucianism *xingxiu*, "[self-]investigation and [self-]cultivation," is grounded in an optimistic view of human nature: evil is conceived of as a kind of crust that has developed due to external factors, and that does not affect the basic goodness of our nature. However, as Wu Pei-yi has demonstrated in an important study,[37] precisely during the period under consideration (roughly between 1570 and 1670) there was in Confucian circles a heightened awareness of evil and guilt, and an unprecedented readiness for self-disclosure and self-accusation, sometimes in very strong terms. Wu Pei-yi probably is right when he relates this to a feeling of moral *malaise* that also inspired conservative Confucians to fulminate against libertarianism and to take part in moral crusades like the Donglin
[127] and Fushe movements. We may add that it also may have heightened the appeal of Christianity and its preoccupation with guilt and sin in certain literati circles.

However, the cases of self-indictment described by Wu Pei-yi are individual statements of moral failure and remorse; to the frustrated scholars

[37] Wu Pei-yi 1979, pp. 5–38.

who wrote them the only solution lay in intensified self-cultivation. There is no question of divine retribution, no forgiving superhuman power, no priest, and no redeeming ritual. There was the vague concept of "sinning against Heaven" (*de zui yu tian* 得罪於天), but this lacked a clearly defined religious content and ritual expression. The sentiment was there, but it remained ritually underdeveloped.

Here Christianity could come in to fill the gap, for it not only offered a consistent set of beliefs concerning the nature of sin and divine retribution—it also supplied some powerful rituals, notably the sacraments of baptism, confession and the communion. By providing such purifying and redeeming rituals it indeed could *yi fo* 易佛, be a substitute for the Buddhist ceremonials that so far had served to "complement Confucianism." Unlike the Buddhist *chanhui*, the Catholic sacrament of confession was strictly personal; it was based on an individual examination of conscience that was much closer to the Confucian way of self-improvement. We can, therefore, understand why "in their religious observance those Confucians who believe in the real existence of the Lord of Heaven always attach the greatest importance to attending mass and to the practice of penance and absolution."[38]

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REVIEWS

R. Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China.* Madison, Milwaukee and London, 1967.

In some respects, this important work is both an elaboration and a synthesis of the late Richard H. Robinson's earlier studies on the logical principles in Nāgārjuna's system (*Philosophy East & West* VI, 1956/57, pp. 291–308) and on the elements of mysticism and logic in the thought of Kumārajīva's most gifted disciple Sengzhao (*ib.,* VIII, 1958/59, pp. 99–120). By far the largest part of the book deals with the reception of Mādhyamika in China in the crucial first decade of the fifth century CE: its propagation by Kumārajīva and its partial digestion by Sengzhao and his fellow-disciple Sengrui at Chang'an, and by the aged master Huiyuan on Lushan in Central China. Only one chapter (pp. 21–70) is devoted to early Indian Mādhyamika (Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva; basic doctrinal structures and logical constructions in the *Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikās*; the relation between Mādhyamika and the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*; bibliographical data concerning the basic texts in their Chinese recensions: *Zhonglun* T 1564, *Shi'ermen lun* T 1568, *Bailun* T 1569, and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, *Da zhidu lun* T 1509; the discussion of the complicated problems regarding the authenticity and transmission of this text has been now largely superseded by Ét. Lamotte's introduction to Vol. III of his *Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse,* Louvain 1970, pp. XXXVII–L). This summary account of the early Indian background and of the basic sources is lucid, systematic and eminently readable, but it contains little that is new.

In Chapters III–VI, which form the main body of the book, Robinson has presented his analysis of a number of well-known Chinese treatises and prefaces, in each case trying to define the Mādhyamika component—both the degree of understanding of the essential purport of Nāgārjuna's ontological criticism by the authors of these treatises, and their actual application of his logical procedures—and to indicate the sources of misunderstanding and distortion. The analysis is highly illuminating, even to one who, like the present reviewer, has not been initiated into the arcana of formal logic.

In Chapter III, dealing with Kumārajīva, we find a rather summary treatment of his life, his writings, and his commitment to śūnyavāda doctrine as illustrated by a number of passages from his correspondence with Huiyuan (*Dasheng dayi zhang* 大乘大義章, T 1856). In addition, the author has inserted an important section on Kumārajīva's methods of translation (technical terminology; concessions to Chinese literary taste; interpolations and omissions), leading up to the basic question of to what degree this kind of free translation may have affected the transmission of the Mādhyamika doctrine to China. By a detailed comparison of the Sanskrit original and the Chinese *Zhonglun* 中論 version of the first sixteen verses of *Mūla-mādhyamika-kārikās*, the author reaches the interesting conclusion that in spite of a number of lexical mistakes and ambiguities, the translation as a whole would certainly enable the Chinese student to acquire a fundamental understanding of the Mādhyamika system: "he will be more likely to miss right ideas than to conceive wrong ones" (p. 88). It would then seem that the considerable amount of distortion and misunderstanding which we find in the writings of Huiyuan, Sengrui and certainly also Sengzhao, to whom Chapters IV–VI are devoted, are due to environmental cultural factors—notably the persisting influence of their 'Buddhist-Dark Learning' orientation—rather than to an incompleteness or adulteration of their scriptural sources of information. However, Robinson's approach, interesting as it may be from a purely analytical point of view, is somewhat one-sided and formalistic. In the first place, we do not know in how far Kumārajīva's exegesis may have 'mitigated' the direct impact of the foreign texts. Secondly, in concentrating on a contrastive analysis of the Sanskrit and Chinese version, devised to measure 'loss of information', lexical mistakes and syntactic explicitness, one overlooks what is probably the most important distorting factor: the traditional connotations which a number of key terms (*you* 有 'being'; *wu* 無 'non-being'; *sheng* 生 'arising'; *zhen* 眞 'real', *miao* 妙 'abstruse/wonderful', etc.) had obtained in the hybrid terminology and ways of thought of the 4th century cultured clergy, deeply influenced as they were by their own 'Buddho-Neo-Daoist' brands of Prajñāpāramitā exegesis.

[123] This indeed is the weak point of an otherwise valuable and stimulating study. Robinson's first chapter, dealing with "questions and method", has the great advantage of defining the field of enquiry with unusual clarity and precision. The study concentrates on modes of formal reasoning in a limited number of Chinese texts, in relation to the Indian prototypes that were introduced by Kumārajīva. It deliberately excludes the comparison of Mādhyamika with 'Neo-Daoist systems' (p. 19), and only incidentally

refers to earlier Chinese Buddhist speculations: a key figure like Zhi Dun is only mentioned once, in passing. Whatever the merits of such a strict delimitation, the question remains as to how far such a delimitation is justifiable when dealing with the introduction of Mādhyamika, i.e. of a scholastic systematization of *śūnyavāda*, into a cultured milieu which had already formed its own hybrid philosophy centered around concepts like 'fundamental Non-Being', 'Substance' (*ti* 體) and 'Function' (*yong* 用), the transcendental Nature of the 'Saint' who 'responds to situations' without being affected by them, the basic Unity underlying all phenomena, etcetera. By concentrating on the Mādhyamika component and on the Chinese author's ability to apply the principles of syllogistic reasoning, Robinson has narrowed the perspective to such an extent, that he tends to lose sight of the *basic orientation* of these early Chinese Buddhist thinkers. Their basic orientation was that of Buddhist 'Dark Learning', no doubt stimulated and deepened by Mādhyamika elements, but unaltered in its fundamental issues. This is especially true in the case of Sengzhao, who is here represented as 'thoroughly Mādhyamika' (p. 159), and 'orthodox śūnyavāda' (p. 160).

This can only be taken to mean that Sengzhao, in spite of his own array of basic terms and concepts ('holy mind', 'intuition', 'calmness' versus 'function', etc., enumerated and defined on pp. 127–129), and of his generally faulty attempts at syllogistic reasoning, fundamentally agrees with the 'therapeutic' orientation of Nāgārjuna: the demonstration of the intrinsic absurdity of all positive and negative propositions, hence the destruction of all conceptualization without any attempt at filling the void with a metaphysical entity. In this, Robinson consistently opposes Walter Liebenthal's opinion that, unlike Nāgārjuna, Sengzhao wishes to establish the reality of a metaphysical entity at a higher level of existence, vaguely identified with the mind of the Sage and the hidden source of the operations of Nature.

In spite of all the criticism that can be levelled against Liebenthal's 'philosophico-religious interpretations' (Robinson, p. 4), his quaint methods of translation, and his attempt to transform Sengzhao into an ecstatic visionary. I believe that, after all, Liebenthal's *xuanxue* interpretation of Sengzhao's central conception is right. Time and again, the latter's reasonings can be reduced to one basic formula: "*in a certain way*, the Absolute is at rest, in a state of undifferentiated unity and self-absorption; *in another way*, it is manifested, differentiated, and active in the phenomenal world". It therefore transcends the spheres of Being and Non-being; substance and function. The Essence is 'real', but not existent, and 'empty', though not inexistent. Unlike Nāgārjuna, Sengzhao does not ask us to give

up all attempts at definition, but rather to accept Substance and Function as two complementary perspectives on the Absolute. Whatever the Mādhyamika component, this is essentially 'Dark Learning'. Sengzhao's message is primarily concerned, *more sinico*, with unity and the harmonization of opposites rather than with their negation. In the last analysis, its source of inspiration is not the refutation of ābhidharmika realism, but rather the fundamental identity of 'being' and 'non-being', the 'named' and the 'nameless'—an identity which, in the words of the *Daodejing*, is the 'gate of all mysteries'.

There is no reason to assume that Robinson was not aware of the *xuanxue* context in which the ideas of Huiyuan, Sengrui and Sengzhao are embedded. In his introductory chapter, he lucidly discusses the general methodological problems connected with cultural transmission and assimilation (pp. 4–10), and his annotations betray a broad familiarity with the scriptural sources of Dark Learning (there are, however, very few references to pre-Kumārajīva Chinese Buddhist treatises; even Dao'an's important views on *Prajñāpāramitā* are practically ignored).

The somewhat formalistic stress on one component of early Chinese Buddhist thought seems to be the result of a self-imposed and far too strict delimitation of the subject.

In spite of these critical remarks, it must be emphasized that Robinson
[124] has written an important book, intelligent and highly original, consistent in its methodology, and of admirable precision and elegance in style. It is deeply regretted that it had to be his last.

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Mélanges de sinologie offerts à Monsieur Paul Demiéville II, Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes chinoises vol. XX (Paris, 1974).

In his article "A propos du *Nidānasaṃyukta*" Professor J. W. de Jong presents a critical review of the attempts made by Ernst Waldschmidt and Candrabhāl Tripāṭhī to restore the Sanskrit text of the Turfan manuscript S 474 which contains 25 *sūtras* corresponding to two sequences of short scriptures in the Chinese version of the *Saṃyuktāgama* (T 99), most of which have their Pāli counterpart in the *Nidānasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyuttanikāya.* Apart from the detailed *addenda et corrigenda* directly pertaining to these texts, where the author displays his well-known erudition and critical acumen, Professor de Jong also raises an important general question. This is in how far a "Textbearbeitung" aiming at the reconstruction of the "common ancestor" of a Buddhist scripture is possible on the basis of the different written versions and recensions now at our disposal. In doing so, he rightly warns against the simplistic view that these written versions, transmitted through widely different channels, in different periods and in different languages, could be regarded as the direct offshoots of one common prototype. On the contrary, especially in the case of the *sūtras* the attempt at reconstruction is seriously hampered by the fact that the various recensions of a scripture had already taken shape during the long period of oral transmission, and that the extant
[115] texts must be regarded as rather late representatives of widely divergent traditions, profoundly altered both by textual accretion and by linguistic factors. The *sūtras* were probably committed to writing at a comparatively late stage, when the monasteries had sufficient numbers of clerical copyists to ensure a regular production of texts, and when the development of Mahāyāna scholasticism had given rise to a type of "specialist" literature of a distinct literary nature.

Anyone who, like the present reviewer, has faced the almost hopeless task of confronting the earliest Chinese versions (notably those of An Shigao and his school) with their Indian "counterparts" will readily agree with Professor de Jong's remarks. One could add, however, that as far as Mahāyāna scriptures are concerned, it would seem that the work of copying and distribution was no longer an exclusively clerical affair.

This is not only witnessed by the well known cliché figuring in many Mahāyāna scriptures where the most staggering rewards are promised to those “sons of good families” who will copy (*likhayati*) the text, but also, as far as China is concerned, by historical evidence which goes back to the earliest period of Chinese Buddhism. One may think of the laymen who assisted and sponsored Lokakṣema around 180 CE and whose names have been preserved in contemporary colophons (*Chu sanzang jiji* VII, T 2145, p. 47c and 48c), of the mysterious “Master Ge 葛氏, a Chinese layman who in the early 3rd century transmitted a now lost version of the *Dharmapada* (*CSZJJ* VII.50.1), of the learned Chinese laymen who transmitted the *Anban shouyi jing* 安般守意經 to Kang Senghui around the middle of the 3rd century (*ib.* VI.42c), and to the Parthian merchant Anxuan 安玄 and the famous *upāsaka* of Indo-Scythian descent Zhi Qian 支謙, who as laymen were active in the production of written versions of Buddhist scriptures. The first evidence of copying scriptures “at home” is also very early; it is contained in a colophon to the *Shi’ermen jing* 十二門經 (translated by An Shigao; now lost) reading “Copied in the seventh year of Jiahe (283 CE) at Jianye, in the house of police commissioner Zhou” (*CSZJJ* VI.46b). Even though all this took place in China, it may well be that it was inspired by foreign examples and that the copying of texts by or at the charge of lay devotees became a powerful factor in the—always relative—stabilization of the texts as soon as this came to be regarded as a pious work.—To the discussion outlined above Professor de Jong has added the Tibetan translation of the *Pratītyasamutpādādivibhaṅganirdeśa.*

[117] The contribution by Professor Walter Liebenthal, entitled *“Ngo* 我, variations of meaning” (published in English; pp. 197–204), briefly describes the meanings of *wo* as a pronoun referring to the first person (common); or, by extension, to “our group”, sometimes even “people in general” (only pre-Han examples are given, but *wo* = “one”, “man in general”, also regularly occurs in post-classical texts, e.g. several times in the *Baopuzi*) and notes the specifically Buddhist use of *wo* to render *ātman.* He then goes on to discuss the remarkable way in which *wo* is used, particularly in the *Zhaolun*, to denote “the Cosmic Sage” who transcends the limitations of being and non-being. The author mentions the familiar passages from the *Laozi* where *wo* seems to denote the exemplary Sage, rather than the author himself as an individual, and in view of Sengzhao evident *xuanxue* background, I have not the slightest doubt that this was his source of inspiration. As is always the case in this type of hybrid *xuanxue* Buddhism, the term is associated with concepts and images of Buddhist (notably Mādhyamika)

origin, but the author's statement that this use of *wo* "was new, and was, no doubt, due to Buddhist influence" goes too far. The evidence given, viz. a passage from the commentary on the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (T 1775, containing glosses by Kumārajīva, Sengzhao and Daosheng), is self-defeating, since the terms used there, such as 眞我, 眞主, 眞宰, are clearly of Daoist provenance—as is emphasized by the author himself. After several readings I still fail to see what Professor Liebenthal exactly wants to say. In any case, his thesis that Sengzhao "must, somehow, have forgotten where he had found the term *ngo*", and that "in search for an authority to which he might refer, he convinced himself that in the *Laozi* the Sage speaks of himself as *ngo*" cannot be taken seriously.

In his contribution "The introduction to *Dhyāna-pāramitā* by Kang Senghui in the *Liu-tu chi-ching*" (published in English; pp. 205–230), Professor Arthur E. Link presents a copiously annotated translation of one of the most important documents of 3rd century Chinese Buddhism, and more specifically of the eclectic Buddhism which grew up in the kingdom of Wu, at Jianye, where it appears to have had relations, right from the start, with the court and the cultured upper class. Like his predecessor Jin Qian, the Sogdian-Indo-Chinese preacher Kang Senghui 康僧會 produced "literary adaptations" suited to the taste of his cultivated public, rather than
[118] attempts at literal translation. He belongs to a trend attested since the late 2nd century (by the earliest Buddha biographies, T 184 and T 196, and by the *Fajing jing* 法鏡經, T 322), which is quite distinct from An Shigao's first crude renderings and Lokakṣema's primitive translations, teeming with phonetic transcriptions and vulgarisms. The language is almost pure *wenyan*, virtually every proper name or technical expression is translated, and Chinese stylistic features abound. On the other hand, Kang Senghui's Buddhism formed a continuation of the northern school of An Shigao with its stress on *dhyāna* and its predilection for respiratory techniques and mental exercises as means to achieve both saintliness and miracle-working powers. In dealing with these aspects Kang Senghui did not apply his own "polished" terminology, but borrowed from the most obscure product of An Shigao's school: the hopelessly garbled mixture of text and early commentary known as the *Da anban shouyi jing* 大安般守意經 (T 602; Professor Link did, of course, not have access to the attempt at separation of text and glosses undertaken by Ui Hakuju 宇井伯壽 in his Japanese translation, published in his *Yakkyōshi no kenkyū* 譯經史の研究, Kyoto, Iwanami shoten, 1971, which in general seems quite convincing).

In this way, the author's article is essentially a study in early Chinese Buddhist terminology of two different strata: archaic and "early Buddhist *wenyan*", exemplified by a document that poses many difficulties to the translator. As such, it is an important contribution, done with great insight and meticulous attention to detail. It is to be deplored, however, that at one of the most essential points, where Kang Senghui speaks of the sixteen topics of mental concentration associated with respiratory techniques (*ānāpāna*), from the mere concentration on respiratory rhythm to the abandonment of personal existence itself, the translator surrenders and does not even offer a tentative interpretation.

Here I would like to make some additional remarks about problems of terminology.

1) p. 208, note 4: the list of "ancient" renderings compiled by Sengyou mainly refers to the archaic terminology used by the translators of Wu. In some genuine Han scriptures we find still other weird translations which, like those of Kang Senghui, never became popular (e.g. T 630: 天尊 *bhagavat*; 除惡 *bhiksu*; 履跡無著 *arhat*; T 322: 除饉 *bhikṣu*; 理家 *gṛhapati*; 著天 *kulaputra*). These, and the renderings listed by Sengyou, belong to a period in which various small groups or schools apparently invented
[119] their own set of Chinese equivalents, before the early terminology became standardized in the late 3rd century school of Dharmarakṣa.

2) p. 207, note 3: Zhi Qian's rightly famous Buddha biography *Taizi ruiying benqi jing* 太子瑞應本起經 (T 185) is not a translation at all. It is a very able compilation, made up from fragments culled from at least four earlier Chinese texts (T 184, T 196, T 188—of which the traditional attribution to the early 4th century Nie Daozhen 聶道眞 is no longer tenable—and at least one unknown source). Zhi Qian has "polished" the style and eliminated the most glaring contradictions from his sources, but the verbatim correspondence is such that T 185 definitely cannot be regarded as an original text; it should not be used in any comparative study of the Indian and early Chinese stories of the Buddha's career.

3) p. 210, note 3: the language of the glosses in the *Da anban shouyi jing* is archaic; the attribution to Dao'an is to be rejected. There is every reason to suppose that they basically represent the exegesis transmitted to Kang Senghui by three laymen from the school of An Shigao, as stated by Kang in his preface to this scripture.

4) p. 211, note 1: we do find explanatory glosses to translations or transliterations in a number of archaic scriptures. However, the phenomenon to which the author refers—the "double rendering" in which an Indian

term is rendered by a composite form, consisting of transcription *plus* translation—is extremely rare. Among the approx. 530 transcriptions which I have collected from Han scriptures I have only found three hybrid forms of this type: 刹土 *kṣetra*; 術闍 ? *vidyā*; 沙門道人 *śramaṇa*.

5) p. 213: Kang Senghui's text deviates on so many points from the *Taizi ruiying benqi jing* that there can be no question of direct borrowing or adoption. Both texts (or in the case of T 185, the original source from which Zhi Qian took this fragment) clearly render two versions of a stereotyped description of the four *dhyāna* stages, which in their original form already showed minor variations.

6) p. 216: the familiar cliché of the potter symbolizes complete mastery over the "clay" (here standing for all mental processes). The translation "if the clay is lacking fine particles of sand, in doing this, how can he produce a vessel?" (泥無沙礫, 在作何器) should be corrected to read "His clay is free from fragments of sand and pebble (which would make the clay unwork-
[120] able), and he, with full mastery (在 for 自在) will make whatever vessel (he likes)". The use of 何 in the sense of "whatever" is characteristic of the early Buddhist scriptural style.

7) p. 217: *er* 兒 as the second part of a binome, regularly attested in early Buddhist scriptures, should not be regarded as an enclitic suffix, like in modern Peking Chinese, but rather as a generic, slightly pejorative element, indicating persons of lower social standing. The examples given in Ushijima Tokuji 牛島德次, *Kango bumpō ron: chūko hen* 漢語文法論 (中古編), (Tokyo, 1971), p. 51, all refer to children or to persons of inferior status. According to Wang Li 王力, *Hanyu shigao* 漢語史稿 (Peking, 1958), p. 229, enclitic *er* referring to inanimate objects is not attested in pre-Tang sources, as is also concluded by Ōda Tatsuo 大田長夫, *Chūgoku rekishi bunpō* 中國歷史文法 (Tokyo, 1958), p. 90.

[122] An even more audacious effort at translation and interpretation than that offered by Professor Link's article discussed above is made by Professors Leon N. Hurvitz and Arthur E. Link in "Three *Prajñāpāramitā* Prefaces of Tao-an" (published in English; pp. 403–470). The subject of this major contribution occupies a central place in the history of early Chinese Buddhist thought: the reception and absorption of the Mahāyāna doctrine of universal Emptiness and its amalgamation with current *xuanxue* 玄學 speculations among the 4th century Chinese cultured élite. The famous master Dao'an (312–385) played, among his other activities, an important role in the first Chinese attempts at exegesis. To the many attempts to express the essential message of the *Prajñāpāramitā* in an inextricable

mixture of Buddhist and Neo-Daoist concepts and terms, he added his own “school” of “Fundamental Non-being”, *ben wu* 本無. Apart from one very puzzling mid-5th century fragment which claims to reflect Dao’an’s exegesis, the only documents which allow us to gain first-hand insight into his particular type of *xuanxue/prajñāpāramitā* thought consist of the three prefaces translated here. Two of these were originally added to two commentaries written by Dao’an to Lokakṣema’s Late Han translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, and to two versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā* in 24,000 *ślokas*, respectively; the third preface went with Dao’an collated edition of the larger version, enriched by passages from a recently imported recension from Turfan. Once Kumārajīva and his school had presented the Chinese with a far more authentic picture of the doctrine of Empti-
[123] ness, both in translation and in exegesis, these primitive attempts were doomed to oblivion. The early commentaries and synoptic versions of the age of Dao’an disappeared, and only the prefaces (preserved, as usual, in Sengyou’s late 5th century *Chu sanzang ji ji*, T 2145) bear witness to what once must have been an extensive and fascinating literature.

Unfortunately, Dao’an prefaces are among the most notoriously difficult documents of *xuanxue* Buddhism, not even the *Zhaolun* excepted. The language is extremely concentrated, vague and ambiguous, and forced into the Procrustes bed of the worst Six Dynasty artificiality; reasoning is expressed through series of suggestive images and allusions, rather than, in the Indian way, through a logical sequence of argument and counter-argument.

We must admire the authors for the exemplary way in which they have treated the subject. On the one hand, they have retained the character of the original documents by presenting a reliable and profusely annotated translation of the prefaces, and, on the other hand, they have digested and rearranged the essential contents into a systematic, coherent and eminently readable essay: an historical introduction about Dao’an, remarks on the basic ideas (or “non-ideas”) of the *Prajñāpāramitā* and its reception and *xuanxue* hybridization in 4th century China, and an outline of Dao’an theory of “Fundamental Non-being”. The translation of the prefaces is followed by a summary, in which the essential ideas (including Dao’an’s interesting remarks about the problems of translating the Indian sacred texts into Chinese) are re-phrased and rearranged in a systematic fashion.

The only objection which I could make refers to this very kind of recasting, because it introduces an element of logical coherence and lucidity which is alien to Dao’an’s way of thought as expressed in his prefaces: it

replaces metaphors by factual statements, it transforms a loose association of images by a step-by-step argumentation, and in so doing denaturizes the subject. For the basic reason behind Dao'an obscurity and incoherence goes far deeper than the trappings of stylistic convention. It is, in the deepest sense, another way of thought, in which the monotonous but clear-cut and well-defined formulas of the *Prajñāpāramitā* are dissolved into a world of symbols and intuitions—just as, some decades later, Nāgārjuna's almost mathematical precision fades away into the utter obscurity of Sengzhao's mystical effusions. In other words, "darkness" is a most essential element in Dark Learning, and any attempt to
[124] dispel it by the light of reason, however indispensable to a western public, will take the very heart out of it. But perhaps the problem is insoluble, and this combination of translation and analysis, both of the highest quality, may after all be the only way to penetrate into the arcana of 4th century Chinese Buddhist thought.

One remark, which concerns a detail, but still one which does not seem out of order, when dealing with *prajñāparamitā.* Already in 1926 (*T'oung Pao* XXIV, pp. 274–275) P. Pelliot had argued that the alternative reading *BORE* for 般若, which goes back to the *Yiqiejing yinyi*一切經音義 of 817, is probably due to Huilin's "faux purisme résultant d'une théorie etymologique erronée". In the case of the title of T 418, 般舟三昧經, one is indeed tempted to read *bozhou* (AC* b'uât-tśiəu) as a rendering of *pratyu*[*tpanna*], or rather of a hypothetical Prākrit form **paccu* [*ppanna*]. But, on the other hand, it should be remarked that in several archaic Buddhist transcriptions syllables ending in *-an* are used where we would expect a simple vowel, such as 潘利 for *sphaṭika* (T 280.445.3); 阿難邠坻 for *Anāthapiṇḍada* (T 350.189.2); 摩難斯 for *Manasvatī* (T 418.903.1); 阿難律 for *Aniruddha,* and the second syllable in 目揵連 *Maudgalyāyana* (T 458.436.3). In many other cases 般 clearly renders an original with *-n-* (like in 安般 *ānāpāna*, T 602 *passim*). In fact, it seems very unlikely that the early translators, in choosing a set of characters for the purpose of transcribing foreign sounds, would have created such an ambiguity.

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Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 38, Cambridge, Mass., 1993.

Professor Brook's outstanding study of the social and cultural context and function of gentry patronage of Buddhism in the 15th and 16th century is not only an important work in its own right: it also serves to complement our picture of Ming Buddhism and its spectacular revival in the 15th century. In previous monographic works dealing with the Buddhist and "syncretistic" movements of that period (notably Hsü Sung-pen's study of Hanshan Deqing, 1979; Judith Berling, about Lin Zhao'en, 1980; Yu Junfang, on Yunqi Zhuhong, 1981), the approach has mainly been biographical, focusing upon the masters themselves, their religious message and their proselytizing activities. *Praying for Power* shows us a rich and at times surprising panorama of another essential aspect of the complex: the various ways—material and otherwise—in which the larger Buddhist temples and monasteries were supported by the gentry on township and county level.

The scope of the study is clearly defined. Chronologically it mainly deals with the 16th–17th century, a distinct phase in the development of gentry sponsorship; in social terms it is limited to individual or collective support of the public and more prestigious *si* by members of the local gentry, and, above all, it does not claim to describe religious ideas and convictions, but is focused upon concrete manifestations of patronage—upon action rather than upon belief. The author's basic assumption is that this kind of sponsorship—and, to a large extent, the late Ming Buddhist revival itself—must be placed in the context of the economic, social and cultural expansion of the local gentry since the middle of the 16th century. He argues that the whole scale of "self-defining" and "self-asserting" gentry activities that took shape in the late Ming, such as conspicuous consumption, patronage of artists, literary pursuits, charity, and the rendering of public services ("liturgies," in the Weberian sense), was directly related to the quantitative growth of the local gentry itself. The twenty-fold increase of *shengyuan* 生員 between 1400 and 1600, not paralleled by a significant expansion of the bureaucracy, had led to a situation in which only a small part of the local elite could hope for an official career. The surplus gentry

had to seek other ways to define the position and status *in situ*, and in doing so they created the distinctive cultural *milieu* of the late-Ming gentry. Sponsorship of Buddhist institutions, coupled with gentry participation in Buddhist observances and rituals, friendly contacts with leading monks, the organization of lay Buddhist associations, and the "aesthetization" of Buddhist culture—all this came to form an integral part of the local gentry's quest for self-assertion and autonomy vis-à-vis the government authorities. Like building schools and financing the construction of public works, such acts of religious piety constituted a type of "symbolic capital" legitimizing their status within their own communities.

However, in this whole range of status-defining activities the patronage of Buddhism occupied a unique position. Other standard liturgical services (educational and charitable activities; road and bridge building; supporting shrines dedicated to state-related cults, etc.) all were designed to uphold the Confucian order. They were welcomed by the authorities, for they were considered a useful—and even indispensable—complement to the work of the government. In the case of Buddhism, Prof. Brooks notes that there was no such congruity of interests—the individual magistrate could be a devout Buddhist and be in favour of gentry patronage, but in his official capacity his attitude should be one of indifference and detachment. It was precisely for that reason that sponsorship of Buddhism, as a field of activity not related to government interests, provided the local gentry with an excellent instrument to assert their independence: "the monastery provided a location where the gentry could express their identity as a hegemonic elite while passively resisting dominance of public authority" (p. 34).

Apart from these general observations, the Introduction contains a lucid discussion of several other topics, partly of a methodological nature.
[469] In his survey of the historiography of gentry studies the author rejects the Marxist economic model as well as the overemphasis on "bureaucracy" as the all-important characteristic of the Chinese elite (the Weberian model, largely followed by later authorities such as Fei Hsiao-tung and Hsiao Kung-ch'üan). Instead, he firmly places himself in the more recent tradition: gentry status is defined by "a wide repertoire of social and economic strategies," of which "participation in bureaucracy was only a part" (p. 13).

Part I, "The Culture of Buddhism," opens with a biographical essay about the Buddhist scholar and Ming loyalist Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1689), whose activities as a sponsor and sympathizer are exemplary of this type of sponsorship. Here special attention is given to an interesting feature

that characterizes the gentry attitude towards Buddhism: the fact that in spite of all outward signs of respect and sympathetic interest, aficionados like Zhang Dai do not exhibit any signs of intense devotion and personal religious commitment to Buddhism, or of a more than average knowledge of Buddhist doctrine. Their basic attitudes remained Confucian; their Buddhist sympathies were complementary, and from a religious point of view, rather formalized and superficial. Elsewhere in the book (p. 308), where the author briefly discusses the problem of motivation, he rightly stresses the expectation of karmic reward as the cornerstone of lay Buddhism: by late Ming times, the belief in the complex of rebirth, karma and retribution had become generally accepted. The gentry were convinced that they owed their present privileged position to good deeds performed during previous lives, and that by their patronage of Buddhism they would further increase their "store of merit." What counted was the concrete belief in the efficacy of equally concrete good works; doctrinal insight was not essential.

It should be noted that in a general Buddhist perspective this is not surprising. Much more than in other world religions, we find in Buddhism a strict separation of the monastic sphere and that of lay believers. Devotion, asceticism, meditation and scriptural studies are concentrated in the *saṅgha*, a monastic corporate organization of "religious professionals." Lay believers are supposed to have formally pledged their allegiance to the Buddha, the Doctrine and the Monastic Community, but their first and foremost obligation is to ensure the existence of those "Three Jewels" by their gifts and other services. Karmic retribution—the performance of concrete good works that will lead to a happy rebirth—has always been the key note in lay Buddhism. What makes Chinese Buddhism so special is its merger with other aspects of elite culture: aesthetics, poetry, routinized rhetoric, the enjoyment of natural scenery, and secular ideals of purity and withdrawal. It should be remarked that all these features had already taken shape since the formation of Chinese elite Buddhism since early medieval times, in a restricted milieu of aristocrats and "great families." As far as such cultural associations are concerned, one often gets the impression that what is described in *Praying for Power* is not the emergence of a new complex, but its appropriation by the local gentry as a new type of elite.

In a few sections (pp. 54–88) a survey is given of the relation between Buddhism and the successive trends in Neo-Confucianism: the absorption of Buddhist elements by Wang Yangming 王陽明 and the more radical "Taizhou thinkers" of the 16th century, including the idea of the "[Basic]

Unity of the Three Teachings" *san jiao he yi* 三教合一; the Neo-Confucian anti-Buddhist reaction that set in shortly after 1600 (the Confucian fundamentalism of the Donglin and Fushe; outspoken anti-Buddhist intellectuals like Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 and Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲), and finally, in the less activist atmosphere of the early Qing, a situation of accommodation and coexistence.

In dealing with these intellectual currents and changing attitudes and their relation with, and influence upon, the phenomenon of gentry patronage, the author clearly defines his position: by the time the Taizhou trend gained momentum, Buddhism had already gained a strong support among the local gentry "under the surface of metropolitan intellectual fashions," which were "only obliquely tied to social practice" (p. 88). At best the ideas of the Taizhou thinkers could serve as a rationale for patronage: Confucian patrons could use the argument of the "Unity of Three Teachings" to legitimize their sponsorship of Buddhist institutions.

[470] In the next sections (pp. 96–137) various gentry activities related to Buddhism and monasteries are treated. Apart from the standard observances like burning incense, bowing in supplication and the making of vows; the celebration of Buddhist festivals, and the important role of monks in the whole range of funeral arrangements, the author notes the custom, widespread since the middle of the 16th century, to pay visits to monasteries "to search out Buddhist wisdom" by attending sermons and having conversations with learned monks. This subject would require a more detailed study, which could hopefully answer the question to what extent such lay believers actually acquired a more than very superficial doctrinal knowledge. The topics mentioned here do not go beyond some well-known elementary practices: reciting the Buddha's name, vegetarianism, the release of captive animals, and the registration of one's good and evil deeds.

Under the heading "The Organization of Lay Associations" (of many different kinds: devotional, charitable, artistic, etc.) the author aptly criticizes the tendency, observable in some recent studies, to overemphasize the role played by Confucian charitable societies: such bodies formed a small minority in the mass of Buddhist associations dedicated to public service, and they were clearly patterned after the Buddhist example.

After having described some other types of activities that are less directly related to religion (tourism and other cultural pursuits; the various secular uses the gentry made of monastic space), Prof. Brook turns to the topic of members of the gentry becoming monks. From the frequent occurrence of that phenomenon during the last two decades of the Ming he draws the interesting conclusion that this tendency existed already some time

before the fall of the Ming, and that the "eremitic response to the Manchu takeover" followed a pattern that in 1644 had already taken shape.

The main forms of patronage (pp. 158–184) consisted of financial support; the donation of agricultural land; supervision and assistance in monastic management, and "literary patronage," the latter being defined as enhancing the status of a monastery by writing laudatory poems and essays, or by compiling a monastic gazetteer—a genre that proliferated in late Ming times.

Among the many themes treated under the subtitle "Why the Gentry Patronized Monasteries," two aspects deserve special attention because at first sight they are somewhat surprising. In the first place, gentry patronage appears to have been an almost exclusively male affair; female devotees (at all times an extremely important factor in lay Buddhism!) apparently had no opportunity, financial or otherwise, to play a significant role in the display of public sponsoring. Even more surprising is the fact that before 1700 merchants hardly ever engaged in this type of organized patronage. The author explains this in two ways: on the one hand, merchant philanthropy was primarily directed towards family interests and small-scale, parochial projects (like the building of schools and private chapels) rather than to public support of large monasteries. On the other hand, gentry patronage meant to be exclusive. It was based upon notions and values that were specific to gentry culture, and that before the 18th century were not yet shared by merchants.

The exposition of the basic themes is followed by a description of local gentry patronage in three carefully selected localities: Zhucheng 諸城, a poor agricultural county in southeastern Shandong; Yin 鄞 county, centred upon the large city of Ningbo, and Dangyang 當陽 county in Hubei. Apart from illustrating the different manifestations of local gentry patronage, the latter specimen also provides a highly interesting case of the tension that could develop between an orthodox, anti-Buddhist magistrate and the gentry sponsoring a Buddhist temple, in the late 17th century. The outcome of the struggle is significant: in the end a compromise was reached, but hardly to the advantage of the Confucian hard-liners, who proved to be unable to curb the power of the local elite.

The concluding chapter (pp. 311–330) is largely devoted to a comparison between the situation described here and that of the Southern Song and the late Qing. As regards the Southern Song parallel no clear conclusion is drawn. The two periods 1100–1250 and 1550–1700 offer a whole range of
[471] striking similarities: an expanded elite comprising many "new families"; a tendency to further non-bureaucratic, local and parochial interests; gen-

try patronage and an upsurge in temple-building. The main difference probably lies in the much larger size of the local gentry in the late Ming, coupled with an adverse political climate and a wider scale of cultural expression.

The late Qing presents a quite different picture. Since the late 17th century, after the consolidation of Qing rule and the reinforcement of Confucian orthodoxy, Buddhist patronage became marginalized, and the increased government control of the countryside further curtailed the gentry's attempts to achieve a measure of local autonomy.

However—and that is the final conclusion—gentry resistance had always been a shaky affair. By being, in principle, an elite that derived its prestige and privileges from a state agency—the examination system—it could never develop into a real counterforce: "gentry society remained ineluctably tied to what it resisted" (p. 329).

Praying for Power is a major contribution. In spite of the restriction that Prof. Brook has imposed upon the subject matter, the book contains a wealth of observations and insights of a much wider import that make it required reading for any student of Chinese religion and of the social and intellectual history of late imperial times. At the same time it raises important questions that still have to be answered, and provides a stimulus to future research.

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Kuo Li-ying, *Confession et contrition dans le bouddhisme chinois du V^{e} au X^{e} siècle*, Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, Monographies no. 170. Paris, 1994.

Dr. Kuo Li-ying's study deals with a complex of beliefs and ritual practices that have come to play an extremely important role in Chinese Buddhism: the confession of sins and transgressions, both collective and individual, as a means to effect moral purity, to remove mental obstacles and to obtain positive karmic retribution. The basic elements in that complex, both in monastic and lay Buddhism, had been part of the Indian heritage, but once transplanted into the Chinese environment they have led to a whole range of new and original developments. As in so many other cases, the popularity of confessional rituals in Chinese Buddhism cannot be isolated from the Chinese cultural context. In that respect the book is somewhat disappointing. In the Introduction (pp. 8–11) the author has made some remarks about the role played by ritualized confession and expiation in
[208] early and medieval China, both in the Confucian and the Daoist tradition, but without giving those environmental factors the attention which they deserve.

In ch. I of the First Part (pp. 19–57), the chapter title "L'acte de contrition dans les *vinaya*" covers—somewhat confusingly—two subjects which are basically different: the fortnightly collective ritual of confession *upoṣadha* (*jingzhu* 淨住), which forms the very heart of the Discipline in *monastic* Buddhism, and the various formulations of Mahāyāna rules collectively known as "The Bodhisattva Vows" (*pusa jie* 菩薩戒) which mainly (though not exclusively) belong to lay Buddhism. Both types of ritual share the element of confession, but as regards structure and function they are worlds apart. During the *upoṣadha* ceremony, the whole corpus of monastic rules is recited before the assembly of monks belonging to one "parish", starting with the gravest prohibitions warranting permanent expulsion; after the recitation of each rule, monks who have sinned against it are supposed to confess their transgression, and they are punished according to a scale of sanctions ranging from permanent excommunication to rebuke. The Mahāyāna rules show a completely different pattern, although some elements have been borrowed from the *Vinaya.* The rite of the Bodhisattva Vows is essentially one of devotion and self-dedication, the solemn

promise to realize the Bodhisattva ideal, made before the Buddha (represented by his image, or by a master who himself has taken the Vows) and an (invisible) assembly of Bodhisattvas; the prohibitions largely refer to lay believers, and the texts do not mention any punishments for specific transgressions. Confession forms part of the liturgy, but does not predominate.

Thus, in the most authoritative text of the *pusa jie* type, the (apocryphal) "Scripture of Brahmā's Net" (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經, T 1484), the confession of sins only forms part of the thirty-third rule; it states that the devotee has to practise it in front of images of the Buddha and of Bodhisattvas during seven days. In order to make sure that he is indeed purged of his sins, he has then to wait for the manifestation of some lucky sign that confirms the absolution—an interesting feature that is greatly elaborated in later scholastic treatises. According to the sixth century Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi 智顗, such signs are of four kinds, that are linked with different conditions; they range from (on the lowest level) apparitions seen in dreams up to the
[209] spontaneous inner realization of doctrinal truths.

In the second chapter of Part I (pp. 59–107) the author presents a lucid survey of the classification and interpretation of confession (*chanhui* 懺悔, "confessing and repenting") in medieval Chinese scholastics, notably of the Disciplinary, Tiantai and Huayan Schools: Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667); Zhiyi 智顗 (538–598) and his disciple Guanding 灌頂 (561–632); Zongmi 宗密 (780–841). The main theme is the fundamental distinction made between two levels of confession-and-penitence. The first and lower one, called "Phenomenal Confession" (*shichan* 事懺), is based upon the realization of one's factual transgressions and moral shortcomings; it comprises both the penitential rituals of the Hīnayāna and the outward trappings of the Mahāyāna such as the invocation of the names of the "Buddhas of the Universe". The second and higher level, that of "Noumenal Confession" (*lichan* 理懺), consists of the realization of the highest truth of universal, transcendent Emptiness, in which all distinctions, including that of merit and sin, have lost their identity: by realizing the illusoriness of the karmic process, the practicant is freed from the burden of sin.

The author then moves from the *arcana* of scholastic philosophy to a number of texts that describe—still in rather theoretical terms—the practice of confession and related rituals, mostly in the context of mental concentration (*samādhi*), such as the Tiantai manuals *Guoqing bailu* 國清百錄 (T 1934) and the "Confessional for realizing the Lotus *Samādhi*", *Fahua sanmei chanyi* 法華三昧懺儀 (T 1941). It is here that we find the list of the five stages of the confession ritual which have become

standard practice: (1) *chan-hui* 懺悔 "confession-and-repentance", i.e. the declaration of one's sins; (2) *quanqing* 勸請 "inviting" [the Buddha(s)] to be present and to preach the Doctrine; (3) *suixi* 隨喜 "vicarious joy" (i.e. rejoicing at other people's good deeds)"; (4) *huixiang* 回向 "transfer" (of merit gained by oneself to other beings); and (5) *fa yuan* 發願 "making a vow" (to save all beings). Thus, the actual confession formulary forms part of a much more elaborate ritual program incorporating several essential elements of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

One of the types of meditation in which confession appears to have played an indispensable role as a preparatory purification of the devotee's mind was that of "visualization" (*guan* 觀); the exercises leading to the evocation of a mental picture of a Buddha or great Bodhisattva are described, sometimes in great detail, in a number of scriptures. The six surviving scriptures of this class are devoted to the visual contemplation
[210] of Śākyamuni (T 643), Maitreya (T 432), Ākāśagarbha (T 409), Amitābha (T 365), the Bodhisattvas Bhaiṣajyarāja and Bhaiṣajyasamudgata (T 1161), and Samantabhadra (T 277).

The second part, entitled "Les rites de confession" (pp. 111–170), deals with two types of collective confession rituals performed by monks and attended by lay believers; their main function was to produce "good luck" for all participants, to avert disaster, and (in the case of state-sponsored ritual) to protect the ruling dynasty. In a (regrettably brief) introductory section (pp. 111–117), the author pays some attention to a number of literary compositions of the late fifth and the sixth century CE that have been reproduced or summarized in Daoxuan's collection *Guang hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (T 2103). Most of these documents have been composed at special occasions, notably the large collective Buddhist ceremonials organized by the pious rulers of the Southern Qi, Liang and Chen dynasties (who also figure as the authors of the texts); other texts of this *chanhui wen* 懺悔文 genre have been composed by prominent patrons of Buddhism like Wang Rong 王融 and Shen Yue 沈約. Especially important is Daoxuan's summary of an extensive treatise by Xiao Ziliang 蕭子良 (460–494, better known as Prince Wenxuan 文宣王) entitled "Exposition of Pure Comportment, by Master Upoṣadha", *Jingzhu zi jingxing famen* 淨住子淨行法門, which is largely devoted to the practice of (collective) confession. It is not clear why Dr. Kuo disposes of these very important texts in such a summary fashion. They no doubt are largely rhetoric, and it is not easy to extract concrete information from the mass of bombastic verbiage, but at least these documents are directly related to confessional and penitentiary rituals as they

actually were performed. It is also to be regretted that the author did not have access to W. Vande Walle's excellent and detailed study on Xiao Ziliang's *Jingzhu zi* ("Methode van Rein Gedrag voor de Volgeling van het Reine Vertoeven"; unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Ghent, 1976), but since it is only extant in Dutch, she can hardly be blamed for it.

The two main chapters of Part II contain a description of two types of collective rituals: the confessional litanies based upon texts of the "Buddha-names" genre (*foming jing* 佛名經), and the ritual presided by the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru, as an example of a confessional associated with a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva. Of these two, only the first type is really relevant to the subject of the book, for there can be no doubt that at least
[211] the more extensive *Foming jing* litanies are specifically confessional texts: they consist of an interminable invocation of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas (and sometimes also sacred scriptures), each name or group of names being followed by a stereotyped confession of sins. In the course of time the "Buddha-names Scriptures" kept growing, sometimes to unwieldy proportions: the *Foming jing* in 12 *juan* (T 440, not the largest one!) is said to contain 11,093 names. This hypertrophy of confessional litanies appears to have been a Chinese development. The earliest Chinese texts listing, for example, the "thousand Buddhas of our cosmic period", no doubt were based upon Indian originals, but they are of modest size and bear no relation to the confession of sins. *Foming jing* of the "inflated" type show clear signs of being apocrypha produced in China. The author rightly stresses the fact that in all such rituals there is no question of a confession of specific transgressions committed by the individual in a certain situation, as we find in the Christian tradition. The celebrant declares to be guilty of evil deeds and attitudes in past, present and even future lives; his or her repentance is a means to neutralize karmic retribution, and the sinful acts are only described in generic terms.

Confession et contrition is the result of many years of dedicated research; the author has analyzed an amazing amount of source materials, much of which is hard to interpret. She cannot be blamed for the fact that after all this labour we still have so little concrete information about the ways in which confessional rituals actually were performed. Without exception, the available texts are theoretical, normative, prescriptive, scholastic, or rhetoric. Within the limitations imposed by the nature of the source materials, Dr. Kuo has produced an admirable piece of work.

On the other hand, the study shows some important lacunas, as noted above: more attention should have been paid to the non-Buddhist Chinese

cultural context; essential typological differences between certain kinds of ritual (as in the case of the monastic confessional versus the Bodhisattva Vows) have sometimes been blurred, and hardly any use has been made of the essential documents preserved in the *Guang hongming ji*. Another point of criticism concerns the methodology and the way of presentation, which are almost purely philological: the very complicated subject is treated on the basis of individual texts, each of which is described and analyzed. As a result, there are many overlappings and cross-references,
[212] that would not have been necessary if the author had allowed herself more freedom of movement vis-à-vis her source materials. A topical rearrangement of the subject matter would have made the book much more readable.

However, Dr. Kuo's work no doubt is an important contribution; it is based upon a thorough familiarity with both primary sources and the secondary literature, and in spite of its limitations it marks a step forward in our understanding of the concepts of sin, guilt, confession and penitence in medieval China.

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Antonino Forte, *The Hostage An Shigao and his Offspring: An Iranian Family in China*, Italian School of East Asian Studies Occasional Papers 6. Kyoto: Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Scuola di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 1995.

In this small but thought-provoking volume Dr. Antonino Forte deals with a curious enigma that has escaped the attention of practically all historians of early Chinese Buddhism (including the present reviewer): the mystery surrounding the identity of An Shigao 安世高, the first known Buddhist missionary on Chinese soil. Virtually all studies that so far have been devoted to this patriarch of Chinese Buddhism have been based upon biographical and bibliographical data of Buddhist origin: the largely legendary accounts of his life (or rather "lives") in the early sixth century collections *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (*GSZ*) and *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (*CSZJJ*), a few early colophons and prefaces, and the list of titles of 34 texts that were attributed to An Shigao in Dao'an's 道安 catalogue of 374 CE (preserved in *CSZJJ, j.* 2, pp. 5c–6b). On the basis of those materials a few data have become generally accepted: An Shigao originally had been a crown-prince in Parthia (Anxi 安息); when his father had died he renounced the throne and became a monk. He travelled to China and arrived in Luoyang in 148 CE, where he translated a great number of Hīnavāna texts. An Shigao is the earliest known member of a group of foreign missionaries and translators that constituted the nucleus of a small Buddhist community. The few still extant translations in the Chinese canon that may safely be attributed to him bear the stamp of such pioneering: the idiom is archaic, chaotic, and sometimes incomprehensible. Some forty years after his arrival, around 189 CE, he is said to have left the capital. The *GSZ* account also informs us about his subsequent peregrinations in central and south China, but that part of the biography is clearly legendary.

In this study, Dr. Forte confronts the reader with a different set of data that on some essential points contradict the accepted story; they are found in secular sources, and, as the author points out with some well-justified irony, that information was by no means hidden in obscure texts. Only one source (the funerary inscription in the tomb of the 7th-century
[174] general An Yuanshou 安元壽, published in 1988) is really new: all the other texts have been available for many decades, and, in the case of dynastic

histories and genealogical compendia, for centuries. The author rightly attributes our failure to make use of them to the lack of communication between scholars working in the fields of genealogy, epigraphy and Buddhist studies.

The secular materials explored here belong to different types: (1) data contained in dynastic histories (biography of An Tong 安同 and his son An Yuan 安原, of the 4th–5th centuries CE, in *Weishu* 29 and *Beishi* 20; genealogical table of the 8th-century Grand Minister Li Baoyu 李抱玉, *alias* An Chongzhang 安重璋, in *Xin Tangshu* 75[B]); (2) the *Yuanhe xingzuan* 元和姓纂 of 812 and later genealogical compendia; (3) rhyme dictionaries; and (4) the funerary inscriptions relating to three Tang-time members of the An family who traced their pedigree back to An Shigao: An Yuanshou (607–683), An Zhongjing 安忠敬 (661–726) and An Lingjie 安令節 (645–704).

A careful analysis and integration of all the available data has enabled the author to identify no less than 55 members of the An lineage, and to reconstruct its main branch in an uninterrupted filiation of twelve generations, from the early 4th to well into the 8th century (genealogical chart, p. 109). Some interesting bits of information serve to shed light upon the vicissitudes of that Iranian family living in medieval China. On the one hand, some members of the An family gained high positions in government (mainly civil during the early Tuoba Wei; mainly military under the Tang), which would suggest a high degree of acculturation. On the other hand, An Tong (died 429 CE) is said to have engaged in (probably long-distance) commerce; and An Yuan's grandson An Nantuo 難陀 (early 6th century) and even the latter's grandson An Pansuoluo 盤娑羅 or Panpoluo 盤婆羅 still bore outlandish (sanscriticized?) names. Moreover, both were active as *sabao* 薩寶 (Skt. *sārthavāha,* "merchant chief", or "caravan leader"). Usually *sabao* was a religious title granted to an Iranian who was appointed, in a semi-official function, to act as a controller of Zoroastrians in China. However, the Indianized names of these two individuals suggest that they were Buddhist rather than Mazdean devotees, and the author is probably right in concluding that in these cases the title *sabao* only refers to their involvement in the caravan trade, and does not have any religious connotation.

[175] In Tang times we find no more such signs of ethnic identity; the Iranian origin of the family may have been no more than a faint memory, duly recorded in genealogical tables and commemorative inscriptions. In 757, after the outbreak of the An Lushan rebellion, the prominent military leader (and future Minister of War) An Chongzhang requested permission to adopt the surname Li 李, as he was "ashamed of having

the same family name as An Lushan": this request was granted, and as the change of surname also applied to several of his ancestors and all his descendants, it has become impossible to trace the An geneaology beyond the 8th century. In Appendix B, the author argues that An Zhongjing (= Li Baoyu, 704–777) had every reason to dissociate himself from An Lushan, since his family was related (albeit distantly, through repeated adoption) with the rebel.

However, apart from the vicissitudes of this Iranian lineage in medieval China, the main point made in this study is the interesting fact that in these secular sources An Shigao is mentioned as the founder of the An family, and that in those texts he is not at all represented as a Buddhist monk, but as a hostage sent to the Han court by the king of Parthia. The fact is stated in no uncertain terms: "[An Tong's] ancestor was Shigao, who during the Han had entered Luoyang as an 'attending son' (*shizi* 侍子, i.e. a hostage) of the king of Anxi" (*Weishu; Beishi*); or "[The country of Anxi was founded by a grandson of the Yellow Emperor]. At the end of the Later Han, [its king] sent his son Shigao to enter the [Han] court, and he consequently lived in Luoyang" (*Xin Tangshu*). Statements to that effect are invariably followed by a more or less extensive list of An Shigao's descendants, not surprisingly, for, being a hostage and not a monk, An Shigao could be expected to have had male offspring.

According to the secular sources, after his sojourn in Luoyang the hostage An Shigao left the capital, but instead of travelling through central and southern China (as described in his Buddhist biography), he and his descendants settled in the district of Guzang 姑臧 in Liangzhou 涼州 (present-day Gansu). These texts further suggest that at some time in the 3rd century the lineage split up into two branches, one living in the far northeast (Liaodong) and the other one remaining in Liangzhou.

In spite of a number of uncertain points and contradictory statements in the source materials, there can be no doubt that Dr. Forte is fully justified in concluding that the "Buddhist" and the "secular" An Shigao very [176] probably are one and the same person: there is such a range of correspondences as regards place of origin (Parthia), background (a prince), time (the latter part of the Later Han), and place (Luoyang), that coincidence can practically be excluded.

It should be added that, this point having been established, the author proceeds to bolster it with a wealth of arguments and speculative reasoning that are not always convincing, and sometimes suffer from overinterpretation. Thus, the few bits of information about An Shigao as found in the earliest (3rd century) Buddhist sources cannot be used

as evidence that he was not a monk, just because the authors do not expressly mention his clerical status. In the mid-4th century, Dao'an, who was a critical and well-informed scholar, specifically says that An Shigao "abandoned family life" (*she jia* 捨家) and "changed his appearance" (*gai rong* 改容, i.e. accepted the tonsure and the monk's garb). That An Shigao sometimes is called "a Bodhisattva" does not necessarily imply that he was a lay believer: Dao'an uses the same expression (*kaishi* 開士), whereas elsewhere he refers to him as "a *śramaṇa* from Parthia" (in the section on An Shigao in his bibliography, preserved in *CSZJJ, j.* 2, p. 6b). Nor is it significant that An Shigao does not figure at all in the section on Buddhism and Daoism (*Shi Lao zhi* 釋老志) of the *Weishu*: Wei Shou's selection of topics is extremely haphazard, and does not even include such famous translators as Lokakṣema, Zhi Qian 支謙 and Dharmarakṣa. For some reason (according to his biography as an expression of respect because of his royal pedigree) An Shigao was called "Marquis An" (*An hou* 安侯), but I fail to see why such a honorific would indicate lay status, and the author's interpretation is very unconvincing: according to Dr. Forte, *An hou* would be short for *Anxi guo hou*, "Marquis of the Country of Parthia", *An* here not being an ethnic appellation (like *Kang* 康 for "Sogdian" and *Zhi* 支 for "Indo-Scythian") but in this case referring to a semi-official title granted to him as a Parthian hostage. I would rather conclude that right from the beginning two quite different traditions were handed down concerning An Shigao: a Buddhist one and a secular one, and that these two somehow developed along separate channels.

That of course does not solve the enigma presented by the author; as he himself states, no clear-cut and final conclusion can be drawn. At this stage of our knowledge, and if no further evidence can be produced, any attempt to reconcile the two traditions will be no more than guesswork.
[177] For the time being we can only be grateful to Dr. Forte for having stated the problem, with all its confusing details and unsolved questions, in this erudite and stimulating study.

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Buddhism in China gathers together for the first time the most central and influential papers of the great scholar of Chinese Buddhism, Erik Zürcher, presenting the results of his career-long profound studies following on the 1959 publication of his landmark *The Buddhist Conquest of China*. The translation and language of Buddhist scriptures in China, Buddhist interactions with Daoist traditions, the activities of Buddhists below elite social levels, continued interactions with Central Asia and lands to the west, and typological comparisons with Christianity are only some of the themes explored here. Presenting some of the most important studies on Buddhism in China, especially in the earlier periods, ever published, it will thus be of interest to a wide variety of readers.



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